

If you are a guest with us today, I want to welcome you to Christ Fellowship. I want to welcome all of our campuses joining us today, as well as those who are joining us Online. My name is Rick and I serve as the lead pastor at Christ Fellowship. I'm so glad you joined us today because we are in a brand new series that we started last week, called "It's Complicated". We're talking about relationships, and specifically marriage relationships. What we are doing is we are looking at what God has to say about marriage relationships, not from somebody's opinion, but from God's Word. So, with that in mind, I want to invite you to open your Bibles to Genesis, chapter two, as well as Genesis, chapter three. We are kind of moving on a little bit in this study of the Book of Genesis. While you are turning there, let me share this with you.

I've got a buddy here at Christ Fellowship who is an architect, and not just any architect. This guy is an award-winning architect. His name is Roney Mateo, and I've got to tell you, I'm fascinated with what Roney does, because you see, architects don't just design. Now don't get me wrong: designing, drawing, blueprints, geometry, all of that is a part of being an architect. But an architect, it seems to me, is first and foremost a visionary. By that I mean an architect begins with a vision of what can be created: you know, a house, or a building, and he envisions a house or a building, a structure, that will not only be beautiful, but a structure that will be strong, and a structure that will last for years and years and to come.

Now stay with me, because Roney Mateo, this architect, has designed his share of what I would call dream houses. You and I will probably never own a house like this. We've got one, but anyway, a dream house begins as a vision in the mind of the architect. It begins with a vision, and once the architect envisions what he wants that dream house to be like, once he gets the vision in his mind, then he goes to the drafting board. He begins to draw up the design, the blueprints. You know what the blueprints are. The blueprints are the plan that will be used for building the house. Follow me folks, because once the architect draws up the house plans, he then gives the house plan to the house builder. The house builder then takes the architect's plan and begins to build the dream house. But folks, if the builder wants the dream house to not only be beautiful, but to be strong, and to be a house that will last for years and years and years, for generations and generations, if he wants the house to be like that, he has got to follow the architect's plan.

Now, I want you to track with me on this. Use your imagination for a moment. What if you discovered, and this isn't true, but what if you discovered that fifty percent of the houses architected, designed, by Roney Mateo actually fell apart? Now, if you were going to build a house, would you want an architect like that to design your house?

Probably not, but what if you found this fact out? The fifty percent that fell apart were built by builders who refused to follow his architectural plan. They wouldn't follow the plan, and the fifty percent that were built beautiful, and that were built strong, and that lasted for years and years, those were built by builders who did follow the architectural plans. You would then know that the problem was not with the architect. The problem was not with the design. The problem was with the builder's failure to follow the architect's plans.

Folks, let me turn a corner and draw an analogy to that, because God is not the architect of dream houses but He is the architect of dream marriages. In fact, God is the architect who dreamed up the whole concept of marriage. What God envisions, what God has a vision for, in terms of our marriages, is that our marriages would not only be beautiful, He wants them to be beautiful. He wants them to be fun. He also wants them to be strong. He wants them to last 'til death do us part.

You see, once God got that vision of what He wanted our marriages to look like, it's like God said, "Okay, that's what I want them to look like. It's like God then went to the drafting board and drew up the architectural plan in the Word of God, He drew up that plan in the Word of God for building houses that would last a lifetime. And then what God does, and I love it, God takes that architectural plan and He gives it to the husband and wife. Do you know why? It is because they are the builders. They are the ones that can build dream marriages.

I want you to stay with me, because, do you realize that more than fifty percent of marriages that are designed by God actually fall apart? That is right. More than fifty percent of the marriages that have been designed by God actually end up ugly, actually end up broken, and end up divorced. In fact, there is such an epidemic of marriages falling apart, that we now have a generation of young people who are saying, "I don't want to get married. I've seen it. It is ugly. It's painful. Everybody gets hurt. It always ends up in divorce." So they are looking at this and saying "Get married? Why would I want to get married?"

Maybe that is you today. Maybe you are a single person, and that is what you see. You are thinking, "Why would I want to get married? Are you crazy? They fall apart." Or maybe you have been through a marriage that ended up in a divorce and you are thinking, "I don't want to do that again." Listen: what if you discovered this fact, and that is the fact that the fifty percent of the marriages that fall apart, that end up in divorce and broken, are built by couples who refuse to follow the architectural plan for marriage laid down in the Word of God? The fifty percent of the marriages that do

make it, that are beautiful, that are strong, and that last until death do us part, we find that those marriages are built by couples who did follow God's architectural plan. You see folks, here is my proposition today. God has a vision for your marriage. If this is your first marriage, He has a vision for you. If you are not married yet, He has a vision for your future marriage. If you are divorced and remarried, He has a vision for that marriage. It doesn't matter: Second, third, wherever you are, God has a vision for your marriage, and His vision for your marriage is that it would be wonderful; that it would be a dream marriage. Not a dream house but a dream marriage that would be strong, and that you would be in love with each other.

The question of this generation, and maybe a question of your heart, is how do we build a marriage? Maybe you are here and your marriage is teetering, and is literally about to fail. You are wondering, how do we build that kind of marriage? Folks, we are going to find out as we go back to the architectural blueprint. In fact, we are going all the way back to the beginning of marriage, when God first decided. This is why Genesis is such an important book, because it is where we find out fundamentally foundational things. So, if you have your Bibles, I want you to open them to Genesis two and three.

By the way, if you weren't here last week, if you didn't hear the message last week, you've got to go online and listen to it. It's free. Just click on it, go to sermon archives and you can get it. It is so fundamental to everything we are saying, so please do that. I want to give you two thoughts today about marriages as we move on in this series. A strong marriage demands a strong leader. Someone has aptly said, "Everything rises or falls on leadership." That is true folks. Everything rises on strong leadership, and it falls when there is weak leadership. That is true in terms of business. It is true in terms of government. It is true in terms of churches, and it is especially true with our marriages. You make no mistake about it: a beautiful strong marriage that lasts a lifetime demands a strong leader. Here is what you need to know. Husbands are called by God to lead the marriage relationship. God has called the husband to be the leader in the marriage relationship. You see folks, by calling husbands God empowers the marriage relationship to be strong and to last. You say, "Why?" Because calling ensures that somebody is going to be responsible. Calling ensures that somebody is going to be held accountable, and Christ Fellowship, that responsibility, that leadership falls squarely on the shoulders of the husband. Men, listen to me, make no mistake about it, you and I as husbands will give an account to God for the health of our relationship with our wife, or the lack of health thereof.

I want to show you how this works. Listen to Genesis 2:22: The Bible says, *“Then the Lord God made a woman out of the rib he had taken out of the man.”* So, God made the man first and then He made the woman. He made the husband first and then He made the wife. Now, watch what God says based on that about leadership in the marriage. I Timothy 2:12. God says this: *“I do not permit a woman (that’s the wife) to have authority over a man (that’s the husband) for Adam (the husband) was formed first and then Eve.”* In other words, the order of creation positions the man as the leader in the marriage relationship. Now ladies, don’t get this wrong. This is not saying that you can’t be a leader in the workplace. This is not saying you can’t be a leader on the job. It’s not saying you can’t be a leader in government. All God is saying is this, ladies: Somebody has got to take the leadership in the relationship. Somebody has got to do that. And here is the great news, ladies. God has called your husband to be the point man, to run point in the leadership of this relationship. Guess what, ladies: Here is the good news. God is going to hold him accountable, not you. Amen, ladies? Don’t you like that? He is going to give an account for that.

I’ve got to tell you, I for one do not covet leadership. I don’t covet the leadership of this church because I know I’ve got to give an account for all of you guys. So, help me out! And I don’t covet the leadership in my marriage, because I know I’ve got to give an account to God for that. But folks, whether I like my calling from God, or whether I don’t like it, it doesn’t matter, God has called husbands to lead the way in the marriage relationship. God designed that before the fall ever came, and God reiterated that design after the fall. In fact, listen to Genesis 3:16. This is after the fall. The curse is coming. Look at what God said.

*To the woman he (that is God) said, “I will greatly increase your pains in childbearing; with pain you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband.”* What God is saying is that ladies will have pain in childbirth. Can you imagine Eve after the first time, she had that pain of giving birth to her first child. Then, after that is over Adam is wanting to have sex. She said, “Don’t come over here. The last time you came over here, this was horrible. You stay out of the room!” You know. Can you imagine that? But what God is saying is that’s not the way it’s going to work. He is saying even though you are going to go through all of this pain in child birth, He is saying, in spite of that, when it is all over, you are still going to have a desire for your husband. And all of the husbands are saying “Thank God for that!” So He is saying that you are going to get pain in childbirth, but you will still have a desire for your husband, and watch this: *“And he will [what?] rule over you.”*

Now that phrase “He will rule over you” sounds kind of oppressive. It sounds dictatorial, but the phrase “rule over” is a translation of one Hebrew word *mashal*. *Mashal* is not “He will rule over you”, but it is translated, “He will watch over you.” It’s not the idea of dictatorship. It is the idea of leadership. *Mashal* is a term of responsibility. And the idea is this: Husbands are called by God, you have a calling from your Creator to watch over your wife, and to watch over that relationship. In other words, just like as a lead pastor, I am called to watch over you. Just like that, husbands you have been called to lead that marriage relationship.

Let me tell you what calling does. Calling creates accountability. In other words, guys, when I know that I have been called, that I have this calling from God on my life, He initiates this innate sense of “Oh, my goodness, I’m responsible. I’ve been called to lead.” But you see, here is the problem. When leadership in the marriage relation is arbitrary, when leadership in the marriage is random, what that does is that it paralyzes leadership. Why? Because then nobody knows who is to step up. Nobody feels responsible.

You see, what calling does: Calling creates pressure. It puts pressure on. In other words, when I know, and men when you know that God has personally called you and will personally hold you accountable for the well being of your marriage relationship, when you know that, you feel the pressure of that calling. Without a calling, you don’t know who is called. Nobody feels the pressure. Nobody feels the pressure to step up, which is why divorce is so easy. It is because nobody feels responsible for the marriage.

But listen: when I am called by God, all of a sudden I don’t have the luxury when things go sour to say, “Well, I’ll reconcile with her when I get good and ready.” You see, when you get called you don’t have that luxury. When we have a calling on our life from God, we don’t have the luxury to say, “Well, I’ll meet her halfway, when she meets me halfway.” When we have a calling on our life, we don’t have the luxury of pouting and withdrawing from the relationship. “She hurt my feelings. I’m not going to talk to her anymore.” You see men, when you realize that God has called you and the well-being of your marriage will rise or fall depending on your leadership, when you realize that calling is on you, God is saying to you, “You step up and you fix whatever is wrong in your marriage.” Some of you have a noodle down your back for a spine. You need to pull that spaghetti noodle out and get you a steel reinforcement rod and jam it down your spine, and get a spine and step up and lead your marriage. Be what God wants you to be.

Here is the good news. God provides the leadership plan. You see folks, there are two key factors in leadership. This is true whether you are leading a business, or whether you are leading a government, or whether you are leading a church, or whether you are leading a marriage. There are two key factors in leadership. Here they are: Leaders know the mission. By that I mean that knowing what the mission is, knowing what you are aiming at is essential to leading anything. You see, mission defines the goal of something. When you know what the mission is, you know what you are aiming for; you know what you are trying to do.

For example, as the lead pastor at Christ Fellowship, I've got to know what the mission of this church is. I need to be able to articulate that mission. It is not hard to articulate the mission of this church because it comes from Jesus. Our mission is to make disciples, to make followers of Jesus. In fact, that is our mission statement. We have a mission statement that says "Christ Fellowship exists: Why do we exist? Here is our mission: To make fully devoted followers of Christ." Folks, check this out: To the degree that Christ Fellowship makes fully devoted followers of Christ, that's our mission, to the degree we do that, I'm a good leader. To the degree that we don't make fully devoted followers of Christ, I'm a poor leader. You see, leadership is measurable. My point is this: Just like a lead pastor needs to know the mission of the church, what we are aiming for, just like that, the leader in the marriage, husband, that's you, has got to know what the mission of that marriage is. You say, "What is the mission of a marriage?" Marriage has a two part mission. Number one, the mission of marriage is to glorify God. You say, "Meaning what?" Meaning God is the architect of marriage. Marriage is God's brain child. Marriage is God's dream work. And listen, to the degree that our marriages look like what God wants them to look like, you are a good leader, husband. To the degree that your marriage fails to look like what God wants it to look like, you are a poor leader. To the degree that your marriage looks like what God wants it to look like, you are giving glory to God. To the degree that marriage fails to look like what God designed it to look like, you dishonor God.

You say, "Rick, what are we aiming for? What is it that glorifies God in a marriage?" Well, God is glorified when two become one. That is what you are aiming for. Listen to what verse 24 says: God says, "*For this reason* (for the reason of being what God wants the marriage to be) *a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they* (the two of them) *shall become one flesh.*" Did you get that folks? God's dream for your marriage, - and maybe you have lost the dream, but He is hanging on to it - but God's dream for your marriage, God's vision for your marriage is that the two of you would be so much in love, would be so committed, would be so devoted to

each other that you would look less like two people and more like one person. You are one in friendship. You are one in partnership. You are one in romance. You are one in love. That is God's dream for your marriage.

But that doesn't just happen. Leaders don't just know the mission; leaders know the strategy. Husbands, men, future husbands, divorced husbands about to remarry, remarried husbands, wherever you fit men, it is not enough for you to know the mission of your marriage. You have got to know the strategy to make it happen. God wants you to be one. Can I tell you something? Satan has a strategy. If God wants you to be one, Satan wants you to be divided. If God wants you to be 'til death do us part, Satan wants you to be divorced. Satan is hell bent to tearing the two of you apart and the sooner you get a grip on that and realize what is really happening, the sooner the two of you will reunite.

Satan has a strategy. Here is the good news: God has got a better strategy that will defeat it, but that strategy, listen to this, has got to be led. It has to have strong leadership and men, that leadership has to come from you. So, how do you lead? What is the strategy? Here is how you lead. Number one, husbands lead by leaving. "What do you mean by that, Rick?" Well, listen to verse 24: *"For this reason a man will leave (not his wife, but) his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they shall become one flesh."* Mark it down: Marriage is not the joining of two worlds. Marriage is the forsaking of two worlds in order to create one brand new world. Let me tell you, until we men do some forsaking of the other world, we are never going to be one with our wives.

You say, "What do you mean, "forsake"?" Just this: I'll put it in common language so we all can get it. Other than God, everything else takes a back seat to your wife. I'll say it again. Other than God, your job, your career, your hobby, the kiddos, mommy and daddy, some husbands need to get a grip on that because there is such a matriarchal control in some families, that mommy is really running the show, and the wife knows that her husband is not running the show. His mom is running the show from afar. She is jerking the chains on him. She is moving the strings. Some of you guys need to cut the apron strings, and you need to say, "You are not mommy any more. You are mom. I'm a partner not with you mom, but I'm a partner with my wife." That doesn't mean you don't consult mom and dad and ask them for advice. But at the end of the day, the decisions have to be made by you and your wife.

Let me flesh it out. This comes from years and years of counseling. I'm just venting what I hear, okay? So, humor me here. Guys, this means no flirting, especially in front of your wife. This means you do not look at another woman to lust after her, especially

in front of your wife. You know, I have sat in counseling sessions where the lady would tell me, "He brags to me about how good looking another woman is, in front of me." Sicko! And guys do that thinking that they are going to make their wife jealous. Let me tell you guys. Seriously, that doesn't make her jealous. That makes her insecure, and that leaves her vulnerable to the strategies of Satan. You are playing right into Satan's hand when you play that.

Listen: If you want your wife to be secure, if you want your wife to rise up and call you blessed as a husband, if you want your wife to rise up and praise you as a good leader, then here is what you do. You wrap her up in the security of your love, and you make sure that she knows that all the other women know that she is the only girl in your life; so that she is not always feeling like she is competing with other women and other things for your attention, for your devotion, and your care. You lead by leaving all of that and putting everything behind and putting her in her rightful regal position. Husbands lead by leaving, and number two, husbands lead by cleaving. Look at verse 24: *"For this reason a man"*. Guys, do you get the idea that God is hanging this all on us? He is. Ladies, aren't you glad your husband is getting the leadership. Aren't you glad to give it to him now? That you don't have to deal with it? We will have to stand before God and give an accounting. But listen men, we are the ones who are called to make the relationship one. Here is how we do it. We lead by leaving and we lead by cleaving. Listen to verse 24. *"For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united (cleave) to his wife."*

The word "cleave, or united" comes from the Hebrew word that means to be glued together. You remember I talked about that last week. I got that epoxy glue on my index finger. It said don't do that because this stuff is so powerful. Then I touched my thumb to my index finger and I couldn't get it loose. To get it loose I literally had to tear the flesh. You see, that is God's dream. This is what He envisions, that the two of you will be so one that for Satan to get in between you and to separate you, or to divide you, or to divorce you, would literally be like tearing your flesh apart. That is God's vision.

Folks, here is the point I am trying to make, guys. Husbands, we are to be that glue that holds this marriage together. You say, "Meaning what?" Meaning when there is something that threatens to separate you from the wife, we have a high calling from God to do whatever it takes to hold it together. Let me say that again. You have a high calling from your Creator to do whatever it takes to hold that marriage together. That means if there is a fight, guys it is your mission to fix it. That means if something is wrong in the marriage, it is your calling to make things work. No matter what she has

done to you, no matter how she may have hurt you, it is your responsibility. You are the one that God will deal with. It is your calling to bring reconciliation to that marriage.

Do you know what your pattern is for this? Do you know who your example is? Your example is the God who reconciles things with you. Let me show you this. Listen to Genesis chapter three. This is after Adam and Eve have sinned. God gave them one rule. He said you can eat of all the trees, all the trees are a yes tree. There is only one no tree and it is that one. They deliberately go over and eat from the no tree. I want you to watch what God does. Genesis 3:8: "Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God. He was walking in the Garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the Garden. They are hiding. They are back there hiding from God. They are running from God. Now, watch what God says. "You are acting like a bunch of kids. You are playing hide and seek from God. Let's go hide from God. Let's run from Him." Watch what God says: "The Lord God calls to the man and said, okay, you want to be childish, then I'll tell you what, you just forget the relationship." Is that what God said? No, it says, "*Then the Lord God called to the man and said, 'If you'll come crawling back, we'll fix things.'*" But the Lord God called to the man and said if you want to come back I've got a list of twelve things here you are going to have to do." Is that what God said?

It says, "*The Lord God called to the man.*" Translation: Man had broke fellowship with God, but a holy God took the leadership and pursued us, and the Bible is the whole story of this leader God pursuing a reconciliation with people who broke fellowship with Him and pursuing that reconciliation all the way up a hill called Mount Calvary, all the way to the cross to reconcile things with us. God's message to people is this. "No matter what you have done, you will be forgiven. Just like that. No matter what you did. No matter what you will do, it will all be forgiven and you will be reconciled. Isn't that the message God gives to us? Isn't that the message that we are supposed to be giving to the world? By the way, maybe you are here today and maybe that is what you are thinking about God. Maybe you are not a Christian. You are not sure you believe all of this. I kind of understand where you are. I was there one time in my life. Maybe you are thinking "There is something in me that would like to reconcile with God, that would like to have a relationship with Him. But you are thinking "If I am going to do that, God has probably got a list of twelve things I've got to do, and He is going to be angry with me about this, and that." If that is what you think, that is not the case. You may be far away from God today. but God says it doesn't matter. Whatever you did, God says it doesn't matter. No matter what you have become, God says it is

okay. Forget it. No matter what you have done. God says, "I don't care." I want to reconcile. God takes the leadership.

Guys, if that is the message that we are telling people about God, that no matter what, He will forgive them, then why wouldn't we treat the person that God has put in our life the same way that God treats us? That is, no matter what you have done, no matter what your wife has done to offend you, forget it. You will take the leadership to reconcile. Isn't that what God has done for you, men, even after you have come to Christ. Since you have come to Christ, you still sin. You still lie. You still cheat. You still lust. You still do things wrong. You still fall asleep mid-sentence praying to God. Do you know what that must look like to God. Do you know what God does with that? He doesn't pout. He doesn't withdraw. He doesn't sulk. He says, if you will just come back, no problem. Total reconciliation: That is leadership, men.

God is the model for our leadership. Whatever may be wrong in your marriage today; whatever she may have done, or said, it doesn't matter. You need to take the point. You need to take the leadership and say, "God, I am called to make this right. You say, "Rick, where do you get that from?" I'll tell you where you get that from. It goes back to what we talked about last week. You get the strength to make things right and to lead from your relationship with God. You see, when you get everything from God, maybe you are not trying to make the relationship right with your wife, because you are going, "I can't live without you, please. Don't leave me. I'll die if you go." You are not doing that because you are saying, "No, no, no. That is not the problem. Everything as I need as a human being, I get that from my relationship with God. I am secure. I am fulfilled as a human being. Now I want to love you, and I want us to be one in marriage. I want us to have the kind of marriage that He looks at and says "That is what I had in mind: A marriage that's fun. A marriage that's strong. Two people love each other for good or bad, richer or poorer, sickness or health. They stay together. " That is the blueprint. The blueprint says for that to happen, you've got to lead. You've got to step up and lead. My prayer for you, and I know that this is strong. I pray that you will forgive me if I came off a little too strong. But I tell you, I watch it when it all falls apart. I'm tired of watching Satan killing our marriages, and destroying these remarriages. So my prayer men for you is that you will step up; that you will take the blueprint and you say, "God, everything I need I get from you. So God, I'm going to put my arms around my wife. I'm going to wrap her up in the security of my love, and I am going to lead us back together.

Ladies, let me tell you this. There are probably some guys today that are going to put their arms around you and say, "I want to do what God is calling us to do." Ladies,

listen: don't say, "Okay, I've got twelve things." Don't have him walk out on a limb and saw it off behind him. He won't do that many times. When he reaches out to you today, you do the same. Throw your arms around him and say, "Let's make it right. Let's do this to the glory of God, so that God looks at our marriage relationship and says, 'Dream marriage'.