

# Becoming One Flesh

## *Discovering You:*

Genesis 2:21-24

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*For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.* (Genesis 2:24, NIV)

They will become “one flesh.” That is a phenomenal statement. Jesus quoted those very words when asked about divorce. He said:

*Haven't you read... that at the beginning the Creator “made them male and female,” and said, “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh”? So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate.* (Matthew 19:4-6, NIV)

What does it mean for two people to become “one flesh”? Repeat after me “one flesh”. In what way are two people “one flesh”. In what way, as Jesus taught, are they “no longer two, but one”. How has God joined the two together so that their lives are altered?

In my visits to jails and prisons, I found something surprising. Some of the warmest, most polite and gentle men are behind bars. I’ve often wondered, “How could they commit dangerous crimes?” Most of us say euphemistically, “What got into them?”

I remember 13-year-old Victor. His family immigrated to Minnesota to work in a turkey processing plant. Our community had so many Spanish-speaking immigrants come to fill those jobs that I began to learn Spanish. I learned some Spanish hymns and led my one and only Spanish service. I played guitar, led singing and preached in Spanish at Victor’s home. It was terrible Spanish, but the congregants smiled, nodded their heads and said, “bueno!” I loved

Victor and his family. I took him and his sister to camp with me. His little sister filled my eyes with tears when she took all her spending money, and gave it all to God in an offering to help pay the camp ministry expenses rather than purchase treats or souvenirs for herself as her peers did. I loved this family. However, the sister and family shared their concern with me that warmhearted Victor was making bad decisions. I remember when my daughter came home from school one day and told me that Victor was in trouble. He had jumped a kid because of the color of clothes. Apparently, it was a gang thing. Today, despite coming from an amazing, generous and godly family, despite a warm, infectious smile, Victor sits in prison, a convicted murderer. I really doubt that he understands why he did some of things he did. I suspect he hates himself. Yet, all that self-loathing won't help him understand himself or bring about positive change.

Our questions about "one flesh" are not meant to be a discussion of marriage. This talk and the entire series is about understanding yourself. It isn't good enough to hold up a mirror. It isn't good enough to read the latest article from *Psychology Today*. The latest empirical, scientific finding, at best, hints about what is going on. To really understand yourself, you need to hear from your Creator. I've got good news. He has spoken about who we are and what we experience. For five Sundays, we will learn what he says about us and what he wants us do to about it. This is what we, and all the people like Victor, need to know.

On June 8<sup>th</sup>, we opened this discussion with the discovery that we are a trinity. We are body, soul and spirit. The body hosts and enables the soul. When the body is injured, most often the soul is injured too. However, when just the soul is injured, often the body in time reflects that injury. Together soul and body make up the flesh. Soul and body are united to make up the flesh. Without that union, the body decays into dust. The soul is responsible for our thoughts, emotions and choices. When we talk about our mind, we are talking about a function of the soul.

When we talk about our emotions, we are talking about an expression of our soul. When we talk about our will, we are discussing an activity of the soul. Right now, we are together in the flesh. I see no body turning into dust here, although a few of us are getting some wrinkles. We are in the flesh, and we are doing soul activity. We are doing some group thinking, some group feeling and individual decision-making. This is soul activity.

Now, we shared three weeks ago that on the day Adam and Eve sinned their spirits died. They immediately were alienated from God. Their physical senses now dominated their thoughts, emotions and decisions. They were now victims of spiritual deception and thus superstition. We showed a diagram of three circles where the body dominated the soul and the spirit was dead. I used solid circles because often the body competes for dominance with the soul and the soul has complete dominance over the spirit.

The third component, the spirit, once was dominant as in this diagram. Adam and Eve related to the world based on their spirit-relationship with God. The spirit dominates their thoughts, emotions and decisions. Instead of solid circles in our diagram showing a competition, we made them dashed circles because the spirit brought health and truth to the soul and body. The inner life of a human being becomes cooperative rather competitive. Through repentance and faith, people are born again, born of the Spirit. They now have a relationship with God where his Spirit dwells with their soul, and they can become Spirit-led people like Adam and Eve before they sinned. The church is the family where through fellowship, believers experience and grow in Spirit-led living. We are to become like Jesus – inwardly like him in spirit and soul, and outwardly like him in words and deeds. That is what it means to be his disciple.

This is all review. This is basic human anatomy from the Bible's perspective. Now, how is all of this affected by two people uniting and becoming "one flesh"?

When two people, led by God's Spirit, in faith become sexually intimate, they become "one flesh". They share thoughts, feelings, decisions and control over their bodies. This is the way God joins people together as one. I'm not going to make this explicit; however, even when there is distance between the two, their souls are profoundly tied together. God has done this so that they profoundly bless and complete each other. Their spiritual relationships bless each other, and their experiences and growth bless each other. Their divinely-authored love blesses each other. When a spouse dies, the living partner needs to release that soul tie, so that God's Spirit can fill the vacuum. The work of grieving isn't complete until the soul tie is released.

However, people do not need to walk by faith to become "one flesh". If sexual intimacy was merely a physical act – recreation for some and violence for others, we would treat rape like we treat any other physical wound. We'd fix it all with a cold compress or whatever. However, it is violence of the soul because sexual intimacy is a "one flesh" union.

Now epidemiologists study disease. They've discovered that when an individual has physical union with a mate, that individual's physical health is affected by every physical union his or her mate had with others, and every physical union those others had with others. In the same way, because we become "one flesh," soul ties are established. Truly, there is a spiritual epidemiology that we can illustrate this with five volunteers. We'll show how five "one flesh" relationships affect body, soul and spirit. Let's take some time for this.

When these unions are formed outside of marriage, the Bible calls them "sins against the body". The Bible teaches us that this behavior injures the body. Although I can identify multiple injuries, I want to focus on the good news the Bible gives us about healing, the power of the Holy Spirit, the affect of Jesus' dying for our sins and how we can completely express the will and design of God. No believer needs to walk through the life haunted by their past

decisions. God restores spirit and soul today, and he heals a lot of bodies as a sign of what will soon be the lot of all believers.

Today, you may suffer from or be surprised by fits of anger, nervousness, jitters, irrational fears, self-doubts, spiritual doubts, depression, bizarre temptations, overwhelming temptations, fitful dreams, a sense of condemnation or other joy-robbers that steal away the peace you have in Christ and make the love of God seem purely academic rather than life-fulfilling. Let's take a moment for quiet prayer because Christ heals all of that. As the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm says of our shepherd, "he restores my soul." Jesus does this work of restoration through his Spirit at work through his body, the church. He has given to this believing community spiritual gifts and faith that will profoundly affect you. You are welcome to come to the altar as we sing the closing hymn. A team will be glad to pray with you, so that today, in the context of love (and souls only heal in a blanket of love), you will know the living Christ better and grow in discovering you.