

# [Year of the Family!]

## “Cut the Strings!”

Matthew 19:1-6

**Intro.** – Just what is your price when it comes to marriage? How much importance do you put on this institution? Is it more than a “piece of paper” to you? Are surrounding influences having their effect in how you look at marriage? What about in-laws/out-laws? Do they add to or take away from your view of marriage?

Three men were told by the same doctor that they all three had terminal illnesses and that they had four weeks to live. Individually this doctor asked each man upon receiving this news how they would live the remaining four weeks of their life. The first man said, “I have millions of dollars. I’m going to go throughout the world and give it all away.” The second man said, “I’m going to go out and serve mankind. I will serve people and try to make their lives better.” The third man responded, “I think I’ll move my mother-in-law in with us and I will stay with her ever minute of every day for the whole four weeks.” Taken a-back by this third man, the doctor asked, “Why would you do that when there are more enjoyable and productive ways to spend the last weeks of your life?” “Because, “ said the man, “those would be the four longest weeks of my life!”

Why does that humor us? Because mother-in-law jokes are a time a dozen and we laugh at them not in disrespect but because they often reveal elements of truth. Some parents do a solid job of leaving their married kids alone letting them work out their own marital matters. But most marriages are inundated with the meddling of in-laws and others. The last thing a marriage needs is external interference.

The Statue of Liberty can illustrate God’s perfect design for marriage. The French sculpture Frederic Aguste Bartholdi was commissioned to design a sculpture with the year 1876 in mind. When he designed the Statue he knew he had to structure it correctly. The winds of New York Harbor would rip at the huge mass of copper tearing it apart if not built right. The sculpture would utterly collapse under its own weight if its components weren’t placed in relationship with each other. Therefore, Bartholdi turned to Alexandre Gustave Eiffel, a structural engineer who also built a tower in France that bears his name. Eiffel constructed a massive iron pylon and a secondary skeletal framework to give the Statue its necessary stability. Eiffel knew which parts needed to be joined and which parts needed to be separated. Even so in marriage, by God’s design there are certain elements that must be joined for the sake of strength, while certain other elements must be separated.

*Purpose: to see why cutting the apron strings are necessary for a strong marriage*

This principle was first stated in Genesis 2:24. Four other times it is recorded in Scripture. All marital problems stem from the husband’s and/or wife’s failure to embrace this command. Understanding the matter of cutting strings with parents and others will enable a stronger, healthier marriage:

## I Cut the String of LEAVING

- just what does God mean when He tells us we are to *leave father and mother*?

### A. What He is NOT Saying

1. Terminate your parental relationships when you get married...
2. Parents are to no longer be the prominent figures in our lives – mate must now hold that place!
  - a. every mom occupies a place that no other woman can take in the life of her son, but once he is married, she is no longer the #1 woman in his life.
  - b. every dad ought to have a special relationship with his daughter, but once she marries her husband becomes the most important man in her world. Illus. – Marah...
3. Children who get married must *honor* their parents always..., but such doesn’t mean let them meddle, interfere or attempt (consciously or unconsciously) to run their married children’s lives.

### B. What He IS Saying

- of all God’s creatures, humans have hardest time letting go of offspring. Bears have no trouble giving their cubs up. Wolves don’t go into depression and have “empty nest syndrome”. Eagles literally shove their eaglets out of the nest. So why do humans take so long releasing the reins?

- the cutting of apron strings entails three key areas and is something parents/children alike must do:
- 1. Cut the emotional strings – here is an area that parents better initiate in cutting:
  - a. when conflicts/issues arise between married couples, should not be calling mom and dad; instead should be learning to work things out on their own... give them THEIR space
  - b. not easy to cut these ties as parents, and as kids in a marriage not easy to leave the emotional security of parents and establishing such with your mate...
- 2. Cut the financial strings – some married couples stay too closely attached to parents for economic reasons. To not cut these strings will cause married kids unhealthy dependence /resentfulness.
- 3. Cut the past strings – here is an area both parents and married kids need to initiate:
  - a. past affections – i.e. past boy/girl friends hanging on to these can lead to “greener grass” syndrome. You get greener grass by watering and cultivating your marriage not comparing...
  - b. past sins – God doesn’t pick and choose which sins He’ll forgive and which ones He’ll hold against us. God literally cleanses us inside out, declaring all our sin forgiven and divinely forgotten. Micah 7:19 *“You will again have compassion on us; You will tread our sins underfoot and hurl all our iniquities into the depths of the sea.”*
  - c. in past most “had a life” before met your mate; so, when you talk about special places, events, or people from pre-marriage days, run risk of making your mate left out and/or estranged...
  - d. Philippians 3:13 *“Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead...”* (NASB)

These are the strings of *leaving* that must be cut in order to keep our marriage structure solid.

## II Cut the String of CLEAVING

- leaving is essential, but it’s only a first step. Marriage is a three-step dance, and cleaving 2<sup>nd</sup> step:
  - some parents cleave too much to their kids rather than to their mate and visa versa:
- A. Cleave to the Marriage Covenant
1. Do you promise... so help you God? “I do!” = exchange vows = seal covenant with each other/God. “What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate.” I.e. as husband/wife grow closer to God, actually grow closer to each other = idea behind covenant = glued together
  2. Consider the contrast between *covenant vs contract*
    - prenuptial agreements illustrate the trend today – Illus. Arlene Dubin, a New York divorce lawyer says that some 20% of couples getting married seek prenuptial agreements.

### COVENANT

Based on love  
 Motivated by commitment  
 Till death do us part  
 What’s mine is yours  
 Your interests are mine  
 Prepares for life together

### CONTRACT

Based on law  
 Motivated by compulsion  
 Prepares for marriage to fail  
 Protect what’s “mine”  
 My interests is what matters  
 Prepares for life apart

- B. Cleave to the Truth
1. The Bible is God’s manual for every phase of life, especially marriage.
  2. The Bible gives us instruction for every aspect of marriage – whom to marry, how to grow a healthy marriage, and how to heal a hurting marriage.
  3. This Biblical principle for marriage we are covering in this message – “leave, cleave, one” is sufficient to get a couple through any kind of difficulty.
  4. Everyone of these principles we will be covering in this series is rooted in God’s Word. The key to these principles is to make sure you don’t just read them, but you apply them as well.
    - a. Ezekiel 33:31-32 *“My people come to you, as they usually do, and sit before you to listen to your words, but they do not put them into practice. With their mouths they express devotion, but their hearts are greedy for unjust gain. Indeed, to them you are nothing more than one who sings love songs with a beautiful voice and plays an instrument well, for they hear your words but do not put them into practice.”*

- b. James 1:22 *“Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.”*
- 5. One of the greatest mistakes in marriage today is to hear God’s principles..., but not do them!  
Cleave to the truth! Cleave to your mate!

What happens then when we leave our parents, people, sins and places of the past, and cleave to the principles of God and our mate? Third final point will explain this in detail:

### III Cut the String of BEING ONE

- *“one flesh”* includes the physical intimacy of marriage but doesn’t exclude other aspects of oneness:
  - A. Converging Streams
    - 1. Heard illustration of two, babbling brooks converging together. When they meet they become loud, roaring rapids with each brook bring its own debris...
    - 2. Downstream they form a clear, clean quiet waterway.
    - 3. So it is in marriage. Two people become one, there often is an explosive convergence as they adjust to the new relationship. Further downstream, oneness becomes more prominent!
      - Ecclesiastes 4:9-12a *“Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work. If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up! Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone? Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves...”*
  - B. Becoming One
    - 1. If your marriage is going to have this oneness, you must do everything you can to cleave to your mate – physically, emotionally, and spiritually.
    - 2. The best way to accomplish this is to follow the divine plan God has given – leave... cleave... become one. As you walk in the Biblical principle of leaving and cleaving, you will realize the fulfillment of oneness.

**Conclusion:** A Nancy Hanks married a Thomas Lincoln. They had two children. Nancy died of milk sickness in 1818. In 1819 Thomas set out from Indiana to Kentucky to bring back a wife. He arrived at Sarah Bush Johnston’s and boldly proposed to this young widow: “Miz Johnston, I have no wife and you have no husband. I came a’purpose to marry you. I knowed you from a gal and you knowed me from a boy. I’ve no time to lose; and if you’re willin’ let it be done straight off.” “I got debts,” she told him. She gave him the list of debts. Thomas paid them off. They obtained their marriage license and were immediately married. Sarah had three children from her first marriage and Thomas had two children from his marriage to Nancy.

The marriage of Thomas and Sarah is not a particularly romantic love story, but it serves well to summarize and complete this message. They both had a purpose in their union: they had children to raise, land to clear, debts to pay, crops to tend, and a life to provide for each other. Their life was not filled with thrills and chills; instead, history shows their life together as husband and wife was “boring” by today’s standards. They were not Mr. Perfect and Miss Right as our fantasyland times crams down our throats. They were a simple man and a simple woman making the best of a challenging life, clinging to each other in a marriage they intended to keep together. They understood that to be God’s will for their marriage. By leaving, cleaving and becoming one Thomas and Sarah were able to contribute much to our lives – his name was Abraham Lincoln. Believe me, they “cut the strings” with Abe!