



Marriage Growth-Track

Week 2 - Day 2

Leaving and Cleaving

by Glen & Rebecca Davis

Then the Lord God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man.

The man said, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman,' for she was taken out of man."

That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh.

Genesis 2:22-24

These verses explain the whole footprint of marriage: the creation of woman and the intention of the marital union. This is what we see in these verses:

- Men and women were designed by God to be united as one;
- Leaving means recognizing you have created a new family when you marry and they are to become the priority over your original family;
- Cleaving means joining with and sticking to the other person you have chosen to marry.

Sometimes well-intentioned parents (and lots of ill-intentioned ones!) create and/or perpetuate overly-dependent, needy, and unhealthy relationships with their grown children. Sometimes it's the other way around, like the 30-something kid that still requires acceptance and approval from an influential parent. Either way, the negative effects of these relationships that haven't evolved with the introduction of a significant other can have far-reaching and intensely troublesome consequences for everyone involved.

This crazy cycle of dependency can manifest itself in all sorts of ways—from overbearing and loud demands to subtle, off-handed comments when expectations are not met. Maybe you don't call your mom as often as she would like because things got busy at work. Maybe you choose your sister's side over your partner's when a heated discussion about child-rearing arises. Or maybe you opt for hanging out with your dad over intentionally dating your spouse. But, make no mistake, there is no grey area in this directive from God: when we enter into marriage, our spouse is to become our primary priority, second only to our relationship with Christ. When we choose to act otherwise and ignore the command to 'leave and cleave,' hardships and unnecessary stress eventually (and always!) enter into the marriage make-up.

The best and most effective way to address these complicated dynamics that often come with long-time family relationships is directly but with kindness and honor. Let those involved know the priority you place on your partner and then follow-through by actions that support your claim. It might take a few respectful reminders, but sooner or later those closest you will get the message when they realize the number one place is no longer open for discussion.

Discussion Questions:

1. Do you think "leaving and cleaving" is a phrase that is used much outside of church? What else might people call the idea?
2. If you as a couple could write a "Declaration of INDEpendence " from your family and friends, what would you include?
3. If you were going to write a "Declaration of INTERdependence" with your spouse, what would you include?

Action Steps:

Evaluate everyone that holds a place in your life to ensure that you do not allow anyone but God to be valued more than your spouse.

Prayer:

"Father, thank you for family! Thank you for the many blessings that come from all of our relationships. You are the perfect example of love and how we are to love those you've placed within our life. Help us to be intentional in placing the highest priority on our marriages and to prepare the hearts of those in our life that may have difficulty in accepting this. Help us help them understand God's directive to 'leave and cleave.'"

