

GOD'S DESIGN FOR MARRIAGE (1)

A Meditation on Genesis 2:18-25

A TV news camera crew was on assignment in southern Florida filming the widespread destruction of Hurricane Andrew. In one scene, amid the devastation and debris stood one house on its foundation. The owner was cleaning up the yard when a reporter approached him. "Sir, why is your house the only one still standing?" asked the reporter. "How did you manage to escape the severe damage of the hurricane?"

"I built this house myself," the man replied. "I also built it according to the Florida state building code. When the code called for 2x6 roof trusses, I used 2x6 roof trusses. I was told that a house built according to code could withstand a hurricane. I did, and it did. I suppose no one else around here followed the code."

If we build according to God's blueprints, God's design, our marriages will survive the storms of life. If we don't follow God's blueprints, we can expect to join the widespread destruction.

In Genesis 2:18-25, we not only have a narrative that describes Adam and Eve's marriage, but more importantly we are given God's design for marriage, which all succeeding generations are to follow. To prove this point, consider three passages. First, in Genesis 2:24 we read, "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh." Did Adam have a father and mother to leave, before he could cleave to Eve? No, but God in this instruction is already looking ahead to future marriages where this will be necessary.

Second, when Jesus is asked about divorce, he says, "Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh'? So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate" (Matt. 19:4-6). Jesus assumes that Genesis 2:24 is applicable to all marriages for all times.

Finally, Paul shows the relevance of the creation order. "For man was not made from woman, but woman from man. Neither was man created for the woman, but woman for man" (1 Cor. 11:8-9). Eve was made from Adam and for Adam. This has implications for authority in marriages (and churches, see 1 Tim. 2:11-13). Now that we have a clear understanding that Genesis 2 is a design for all marriages, I want to look at five principles.

Let's begin with the obvious: Marriage is between a man and a woman. Unfortunately, our sinful, rebellious culture requires us to state the obvious—or at least what used to be obvious to previous generations. Since the marriage of Adam and Eve provides a pattern for all marriages we can deduce that homosexuality is wrong. God brings together a man and a woman, not a man and a man or a woman and a woman. "You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination" (Lev. 18:22). We can also deduce that bestiality is wrong. "And you shall not lie with any animal and so make yourself unclean with it, neither shall any woman give herself to an animal to lie with it: it is perversion" (Lev. 18:23). If you think this is fair-fetched, just wait. And, we can deduce that polygamy is wrong. Realize that the sanctions in the Bible related to polygamy do not equal approval. We're already hearing stories of polygamy happening in America.

The second principle is that it is not good for man to be alone. After numerous benedictions—"And God saw that it was good"—we have a surprising malediction—"Then the LORD God said, 'It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make a helper fit for him'" (Gen. 2:18). God did not merely see that it was not good for the man to be alone; He created him that way. He made Adam in such a way that, by himself, he was deficient. And the same can be said of the woman, for we know that Eve was created, not to be on her own, but to be the helper fit for her husband. Together they would accomplish what they never could on their own.

If sin had never entered the world everybody would be married. I stress this because single people don't need to apologize for desiring companionship in marriage. This desire, which can be intense at times, is not only "normal," it is God-given. There are exceptions, since some are "eunuchs" for the kingdom (Matt. 19:12), but most will, and should, marry. While single may feel incomplete, they are certainly not less than whole people. Jesus never married. But the Father did pre-prepare a bride for Him, and throughout all eternity He will be married, and all believers will experience the joy of *this* perfect marriage.

GOD'S DESIGN FOR MARRIAGE (2)

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The third principle is simple, man needs help. “Then the LORD God said, ‘It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make a helper fit for him’” (Gen. 2:18). After all the animals are paraded in front of Adam, he names them, but then we are told, “But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him” (vs. 20). God will rectify the situation: “So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. Then the man said, ‘This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.’ Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh” (Gen. 2:21-24).

One becomes two, and then the two become one again. Why? God is showing us that we are part of each other. In a very real way when Adam embraces Eve he is embracing himself. Paul applies this principle to all marriages, and to Jesus’ marriage to the church: “In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body” (Eph. 5:28-30).

When Saul was persecuting Jesus’ bride, the church, he con-fronted him on the road to Damascus, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting *me*?” (Acts 9:4). Christ takes the persecution of the church personally, since He and his bride are one. And we are one with our brides, which means at the very least that their joy is our joy, and their sorrow is our sorrow. Marriage is also a reflection of the Trinity, where we have unity and diversity—one unified God eternally existing in three persons.

As we said earlier, man needs help, but with what? Before you ladies give your own answer, let me give you the biblical answer. To exercise dominion over the whole world, which began in the garden of Eden. “And God blessed them. And God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth’” (Gen. 1:28). To help man with this enormous task God created the woman. This teaching is of course anathema to radical feminists, who refuse to give up their independence, and submit to God or their husbands. It’s funny that in an effort to be independent of men, feminists get married and keep their maiden name—their *father’s* name. They don’t want to be known as Mrs. Adam, but insist on being called Ms. Eve.

Try as we may, this interdependence cannot be escaped, and it works both ways. “For man was not made from woman, but woman from man. Neither was man created for woman, but woman for man” (1 Cor. 11:8-9). But before this can be misconstrued, Paul adds, “Nevertheless, in the Lord woman is not independent of man nor man of woman; for as woman was made from man, so man is now born of woman. And all things are from God” (vv. 11-12). One theologian noted that the banner over the gateway leading *out* of Paradise reads: Independence (autonomy).

Due to overreactions and abuse, we need to stress that the Hebrew word for “helper” is not a derogatory or demeaning term. In fact, ten times in Psalms alone this word is used of God helping man. So if God is not ashamed to be a helper to sinful man, why should Eve (or any wife) be ashamed to be her husband’s helper. When you ladies help your husbands, even with seemingly insignificant tasks like changing diapers or cooking dinner, you’re imitating the living God.

We husbands need to remember that God commands us to thank Him for His grace and help in our lives. We don’t want to be like the nine lepers who failed to go back to Jesus to say thank you for their healing. God doesn’t like us to take His help for granted, and neither do our wives. On one occasion I sensed that my wife felt like I was taking her help for granted. She said, “Isn’t it miraculous how all your dirty clothes are picked off the floor every day, and then cleaned, dried and folded. And if that wasn’t incredible enough, then they’re put in your drawers or hung in your closet, so that all you have to do is pick out the clothes you want to wear. Have you noticed that?” My incredible discernment kicked in and I realized that *perhaps* my wife didn’t feel appreciated for all she did for me, so I sought to do a better job of expressing gratitude.

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The fourth principle for marriage is that God desires godly off-spring. “And God blessed them. And God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth’” (Gen. 1:28). Notice the connection between having children and exercising dominion. Obviously this dominion of the world is a long-term goal, and will come about gradually through us *and our children*. This is a reminder that there is more than one way to disciple the nations, and fulfill “The Great Commission.” And one of the best, and often overlooked strategies, is by being fruitful and multiplying.

Malachi writes concerning marriage, “Did he not make them one, with a portion of the Spirit in their union? And what was the one God seeking? Godly offspring?” (Mal. 2:15a). God is looking for children, and so should we, since they are a blessing. “Behold, children are a heritage from the LORD, the fruit of the womb a reward. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior are the children of one’s youth. Blessed is the man who fills his quiver with them!” (Ps. 127:3-5).

I wonder why more Christians are not having larger families. Could it be that they have bought into the mentality that says children are a burden or a hindrance to one’s career and happiness, when the Bible says the exact opposite? Or could it be that fancy cars, big homes, exotic vacations, fun hobbies, etc. are considered a greater blessing? God is calling us to be counter-cultural. America as a whole hates children. Almost 50 million babies have been aborted, since the 1973 *Roe vs. Wade* decision. To check yourself, let me ask, “What comes to your mind when you see a big family with well-behaved kids?” Of course if a dozen dirty, snot-nosed kids are running around the grocery store like bats out of hell we’d all be annoyed. But what if they are polite, respectful and well-mannered? Do we still have thoughts like, “Oh my, don’t they know about birth control?” Why not think, “God has really blessed them.” I fear that too many Christians think like pagans, instead of Bible-believing Christians.

Fifth, marriage is a covenant, not a contract. A contract can be set aside at the whim of either party—and we are whimsical. When God entered into a covenant with Abraham in Genesis 15, the solemn occasion was enshrouded with a thick and dreadful darkness, and a number of animal sacrifices. In other words, the covenant promises were made under the pain of death. Christians, who are members of the New Covenant need to remember that it was the precious blood of Jesus Christ which inaugurated the covenant. Jesus said, “This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood” (Lk. 22:21).

Divorce is the breaking of a covenant. Describing the adulteress woman, Proverbs 2:17 says she is one “who forsakes the companion of her youth and forgets the covenant of her God.” Malachi 2:14 tells why God isn’t answering the prayers of the people or accepting their offerings: “the LORD was witness between you and the wife of your youth, to whom you have been faithless, though she is your companion and your wife *by covenant*.” Recently, this commitment has become a joke, in more ways than one. One newspaper comic strip shows two girls talking. The one girl tells her friend that her boyfriend just proposed to her. Her friend says, “Wow, that’s a serious commitment.” The other girl responds, “I know, marriage could affect the next three or four years of my life.” However, from God’s perspective, the marriage covenant is a commitment “until death do us part” between a man and a woman and God himself.

This passage in Genesis is one of the most beautiful pictures in all of Scripture of the radiant bride with her beloved. It depicts the glorious union between Jesus Christ and his bride, the church. The Father says of the Son, the second Adam, “It’s not good for him to be alone; I’ll make a helper fit for you.” So the Father gives his Son a bride, the second Eve, the elect chosen before the creation of the world. Christ’s bride will help him fulfill the mission given to him by the Father, which is to exercise dominion over all creation and make disciples of all nations. This bride came out of the Savior’s side while he slept—a euphemism for death. This happened on the cross when his side was pierced. In order to cleave to his bride the Son had to leave his Father in heaven for a time. Jesus’ bride is an extension of himself, his own body, so that when he loves her he loves himself. This is possible because the two have become one. And they will live happily ever after in the Garden-City (see Eph. 5:31-32).

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