

Marriage: Renewing A Life Long Commitment

Prepared by Pastor Lee Coe

Marriage A Current View

In our world today we are involved in countless relationships; family, office, volunteer, friendships, employee/employer and others. These connections are basic to life and yet we struggle to keep them in balance and harmonious. Quality relationships are an "endangered species" especially between men and women. A recent poll taken by a family magazine reports that 71 percent of those surveyed said they believe the American family was in trouble. In another survey 75 percent of the married couples polled said they believe their own marriages were failures and their marriages weren't fulfilling. That's only one sixteenth of the population! Sad to say, as a pastor I encounter many "Christians" who only confirm this data.

These kinds of statistics are sobering to say the least but they only reflect a greater truth. Man apart from God and His Word cannot govern himself. **Isaiah 53:6** says *"All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way"*. We have become a people following our feelings, setting our own standards. Like a great sailing ship without a rudder, we are tossed to and fro on a sea of moral relativism. Marriage has become "old fashioned". Generation X'ers, are told that living together is a "smart" way to discover if one is compatible with another. They are told that the standard male and female marriage is outdated and boring. Other alternatives are offered by these social reconstructionists as they propagate their own "self gratifying" advice about what will bring a truly satisfying relationship. In public schools "alternative lifestyles" are explained to our youth. Same sex marriage is gaining acceptance as a legitimate and natural state. "Only narrow minded bigots believe in traditional monogamous marriage" is touted by most "Talking heads" on radio and T.V. But as Christians we know that God, in His word has given us *"all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue"* **2 Peter 1:3**

Society did not make marriage; society found marriage." So says L. Vernon McGee. He goes on to say "It is God who made marriage, and He gave it to mankind. Marriage rests upon His direct word," ... *What therefore God hath joined together let no man put asunder*" **Matthew 19:6**.

God performed the first marriage ceremony. He gave the first bride away. He blessed the first couple. Marriage is more than a legal contract, more than an economic arrangement, more than a union of those with mutual love; it is an act of God. Many people think that all they need in order to have a marriage is a license and pastor. But if you are going to have a successful marriage, you have to have God! In the first book of the Bible, Genesis, God gives us specific directions concerning relationships. How appropriate that at the very point of creation God would give us insight and direction concerning the most **fundamental of relationships, Marriage**.

The Husband - Wife Relationship

Genesis 2:7-17 records the setting of the stage when the Lord planted a garden east of Eden (in Mesopotamia) and created a single man to till and keep it. Adam, standing alone in the garden, framed the backdrop for the next major events: the fashioning of the woman and the establishment of marriage. The passage addresses to central questions: Why did God create the woman? What was His purpose for marriage?

Man Alone

In Genesis 2:18, God clearly states man's condition by saying, *"It is not good for man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him."* In that one verse God declares His intent for the creation of woman; man was alone, and that was not good.

Contemplate these two points. First, man was not alone in the truest sense. That fact qualifies God's statement. Not only was he surrounded by all of creation but, even more substantially, he had a perfect relationship with God! Yet, in spite of those realities, God states that it was not good for man to be alone. Obviously, the implied meaning of "alone" is not in reference to Adam's ascending vertical relationship with God nor in reference to Adam's descending vertical relationship with creation.

Secondly, in order to understand any Old Testament statement relating to man, we must understand it from a Hebrew perspective. The Hebrew moralists viewed man's personhood as an integrated whole. They did not divide man into parts as the Greeks did. The Hebrews did not separate the body from the functions of the soul. Therefore, when we read "*It is not good to be alone*," what is implied and assumed is the total person. Consequently, it is not good for man to be alone spiritually, it is not good for man to be alone socially, it is not good for man to be alone emotionally, and it is not good for man to be alone physically.

God's pronouncement includes all of those dimensions. "*Not good to be alone*" refers to the absence of another being like Adam, with a view toward completing his total person. In the truest sense, there was a void of intimacy in the life of Adam. The type of intimacy that involves the blending of two persons into oneness and sameness. Adam was alone, lacking an intimate relationship with one of his own kind.

God made man to be a social creature, both in the broader context of the community in which he lives his public life and in the narrower context of the intimacy of his private life. God made man with the capacity for relationships, not only with Himself, but also with someone with whom he can intimately share life.

Adam's Helper

Genesis 2:18 begins with God announcing His dissatisfaction with man's lonely condition, and ends with His solution: "*I will make him a suitable helper for him.*" The phrase "*suitable helper*" must be taken back to the Hebrew perspective. It refers to more than just a physical helper, such as one needed to tend the garden. The implication was that Adam's needs were special and more specific than anything God had created up to this point. The context of verses 19 and 20 makes that truth obvious. "*Suitable helper*" does not mean that Adam needed a warm physical body to set in motion all of humanity. Rather, it speaks of one who could **complete and complement** Adam in every way, and one with whom he could be intimate. Eve was suitable for Adam but different from him.

Continuing with verses 19 and 20, God uses the naming of all the animals as an illustrative teaching device to arouse in Adam a deeper understanding of the need for one like himself. as Adam named all the animals, he realized that nothing yet created could satisfy the condition God called "alone".

Here Comes The Bride!

Genesis 2:21-24 says, *"The Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then He took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh in its place. Then the rib which the Lord God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man. And Adam said, 'This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman because she was taken out of Man.' For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother and shall be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh."*

The crown of creation was the holy union of the man and the woman. What kind of relationship was this? Verse 24 states, *"For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother and shall be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh."* The phrase *"for this cause,"* also translated "therefore," guides us to the answers of our previous questions concerning why God created the woman and what His purpose was for marriage. The woman was created because it was not good for man to be alone. God provided a companion who was suitable to meet his intimate needs - one with whom he could share his life. For this cause, not only was the woman created, but the institution of marriage was designed. Marriage is the holy reality of two becoming one. God instituted it first and foremost for the sake of partnership, and it is described throughout Scripture as a one-flesh union.

The Significance Of The One-Flesh Union

The phrase *"and the two shall become one flesh"* carries both a primary and secondary meaning. The primary meaning speaks of a union of the man and woman. As stated earlier, the Hebrew perspective appraises man far beyond the physical dimension. *"One flesh"* speaks not only to oneness in body, but also to oneness in emotions, reasoning, and spiritual life as well.

More practical in application is the secondary meaning. It illustrates that a husband and wife become one in relation to the community. Through marriage, a new social unit emerges. When a man and woman separate themselves from their parents they form a new nucleus, and identify as one unit.

The New Testament clearly reconfirms this one-flesh concept. The writers of the gospel records and the epistles strongly emphasized the value of marriage and marital intimacy. For example, Ephesians 5:23-33 gives us a magnificent picture of the marriage relationship. Marriage involves two persons coming together for the purpose of mutual love. The Bible exalts marriage to the highest level, symbolizing the Lord Himself as a bridegroom and the believer as a bride.

Love is the centerpiece of the relationship. In Matthew 19:4-6 and Mark 10:7-8, Jesus cites the creation account. In both cases He quotes the second chapter of Genesis and affirms the institution of marriage as well as the significance of the one-flesh doctrine.

Why did God create woman? Because man was alone and needed someone who could complete him; one whom he would neither worship like God, nor rule over like the animals. Why did God establish marriage? Because through their marriage, partners may serve one another, and through their lives, they may serve others. Thus, the crowning achievement of creation was the holy union of man and woman. Once the woman had been fashioned, God declared that "**it was very good**" (Genesis 1:27-31) and rested from His work.

Children Do Not Complete The Family, They Expand It.

Notice a very important exclusion: children were not present with Adam and Eve when God rested from His work of creation. After He had formed the woman, God authoritatively declared that His creation was very good. I believe that statement to be significant. If children were necessary to complete man and woman, God would have created them before making such a declaration.

Therefore, the marriage relationship lacks nothing. **Woman alone completes man, and man alone completes woman.** Thus, the husband and wife form the nucleus of the family unit. Children do not complete the family, they expand it.

Marriage And Children

Modern society has failed to discover this important distinction. Presently the child-parent relationship has become the more significant one, to the detriment of children and marriage partners alike. Yet, God put husband and his wife in the garden, not a parent and child. For example look at the money that couples will spend on each and every item concerning their children and compare it to time spent on improving their own marriage. Parents build their lives around the children in many ways putting them first, before their spouse. Parents who have built their lives around their children frequently end up in our office seeking counsel when the children begin leaving the home. Because they have lived for their children all these years, their talk, their interests, their schedules, indeed, their whole life structure has been built around the children. When the children then grow to adulthood and leave, the couple suddenly awakes to the reality that they will spend the rest of their days together, and dread it! They have failed to build a marriage throughout all of these years. Their marriage was held together

by the children. After years of marriage counseling I have come to recognize that the most harmful thing that parents can do to their children is to build their lives around them!

Marriage Is A Lifelong Covenant

Marriage is the most basic unit in human society. the most basic family relationship is not the parent-child relationship, but rather the husband-wife relationship. God ordained it so. Marriage is described by God in His word as a **covenant**. In the book of Proverbs God warns the adulteress who flatters with her words, who *"leaves the companion of her youth and forgets the covenant of her God"* **Proverbs 2:17**.

In leaving the husband she married in youth, she is accused by God of forgetting (and breaking) His covenant. Marriage, then is nothing less than a covenant ordained by God. A covenant in scripture is a solemn arrangement involving a ruler and a subject. A covenant is imposed on the latter by the former, and entails blessings when kept and a curse when broken. When one enters into a covenant, he enters into the most solemn and binding arrangement of all.

Malachi also refers to marriage as a covenant. God had refused to accept the offerings of His people. They asked why. He replied, *"Yet you say, 'For what reason?' Because the LORD has been witness between you and the wife of your youth, with whom you have dealt treacherously; Yet she is your companion and your wife by **covenant**".* A marriage is a covenant made in the presence of God. God ordained marriage; it is not optional. The truth is that we cannot do with marriage as we please, whether we please, when and where we please. It is crucial that we as God's creation, in order to enjoy our life-long mate, must obey his instructions and follow His plan found in the Bible.

Marriage

Roles and Responsibilities

(worksheet)

Roles and Responsibilities

The greatest reason for failure in marriage is unrealistic expectations. The average couple enter marriage expecting a wedding to do what only God can do. It takes God to make a marriage meaningful and fulfilling. He created it. Marriage is not a product of a human pervert; it is the product of a divine plan. And God has specifications for the marriage relationship. To attempt to build a marriage without following that plan is to invite failure. That's why the psalmist said, "*Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it*" Psalm 127:1.

Why Are Marriage Roles Are So Confused?

Women:

Scripture reference: **[Genesis 3:1-7]**

1. Her **[willful]** **[disobedience]** to God's command.
2. She **[usurped]** her husbands authority by acting **[independently]**.

Usurp: To take over or occupy without right. To seize another's place, authority, or possession wrongfully.

Women you fail God and your husband when you do not go to him (husband) and ask!

Scripture reference: **[I Timothy 2:13-14]** & **[I Corinthians 11:3,9]**

Men:

Scripture reference: **[Genesis 3:1-7]** & **[Ephesians 5:15-33]**

1. Adam sinned by **[passively]** **[nodding]** to Eve's sinful decision, rather than assuming **[leadership]** and responsibility.

Men in doing so you not only disobey God, you forfeited your God-given authority as head of the family unit.

"Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh."

Genesis 2:24
Matthew 19:5-6
Eph 5:31
Mark 10:6-8

One Flesh: "Husband and wife should serve their Creator together in unity and singleness of heart."

Henry Morris

HUSBANDS ROLE

The husband is the head of the wife and the home.

Eph 5:23

Husbands must love their wives as Christ loves the Church.

Eph 5:25

Husbands must treat wives with respect and as equal heirs of God's gifts.

I Pet 3:7

The Husband and father is primarily responsible for training the children.

Eph 6:4

WIFES ROLE

A wife is to submit to her husband, as the church submits to Christ.

Eph 5:22-24; Col 3:18; I Pet 3:1-2

A woman is not to exercise authority over a man.

I Tim 2:11-14

Older women are to encourage younger women to love their husbands and children.

Titus 2:4-5

She is to be virtuous, valuable, trustworthy, talented.

Prov 31:10-31

***Husbands and wives must not fight and destroy each other!
"But if ye bite and devour one another,
take heed that ye be not consumed one of another." Gal 5:***

Marriage: Communication

(worksheet)

Prepared by Pastor Lee Coe

Communication

*** Proper communication is the key in establishing and maintaining a deep and satisfying marital relationship. You will never develop or maintain a marriage that approximates God's desire apart from an effective communication system.**

Two Common Problems:

- 1) We are **wrong** about the previous communication **system**. (Poor Design)
- 2) We **neglect** this area of communication that we developed early in courtship. (Default) Whether poor **design or default**, the consequences are the same. The couple drifts apart. The relationship deteriorates. Emotional closeness disappears. Basic communication skills degenerate.

Let's look at God's communication system?

Ephesians 4:25-32

1. **[Be Thankful]**
2. **[Resolve Conflict Quickly]**
3. **[Speak With Grace]**
4. **[Speak With Kindness]**
5. **Kind Communication is:**

- a) **[Tenderhearted]**
- b) **[Forgiving]**

Real love and communication do not consist in gazing at each other, but in looking outward together in the same direction."

Men, the discipline of communication demands that you set aside regular time to talk - and that you really do talk, and that you communicate more than facts, that you communicate feelings - that you learn to talk in metaphors and similes' with phrases that begin, "I feel like . . ." And it means that you listen!

(Kent Hughes)

My advice! Ask her?? Is this a "Fix it, or a listen"

Homework:
(for both Husband & Wife)

(Answer these questions together and apply what you have learned!)

1. By God's grace I am a good listener in these ways:
2. With God's help I need to work on improving my listening skills in these ways and areas:
3. To improve my listening skills, I will:

"I have no way of knowing whether you married the wrong person, but I do know that many people have the wrong ideas about marriage and what it takes to make that marriage happy and successful. I'll be the first to admit that it's possible that you did marry the wrong person.

However, if you treat the wrong person like the right person, you could well end up having married the right person after all."
Zig Ziglar

Components of a Good Marriage

(Christian Workers Handbook)

Billy Graham writes: "The perfect marriage is a uniting of three persons - a man, a woman, and God! That is what makes marriage holy. Faith in Christ is the most important of all principles in the building of a happy marriage and a happy home."

- ***Spiritual Unity.*** Understanding the spiritual dimension in marriage has profound implications. Paul compared marriage - the unity of husband and wife - to the eternal relationship between Christ and the church (Ephesians 5:22-33).
- ***Mutual Respect.*** Respect means that each partner accepts the other partner as she or he is, not trying to manipulate but unselfishly nourishing the partner in such a way that he or she may become the person God intended. Respect distinguishes between ideal and the real, and does not demand too much: *"each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and his wife must respect her husband"* (Ephesians 5:33 NIV).
- ***Genuine Commitment.*** The marriage vow says, "forsaking all others." The Bible says, *"For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become as one flesh"* (Matthew 19:5). Time and experience in marriage reveal that being "one flesh" does not mean an abdication of personality or personal rights. Rather, it is a fulfillment of those things.
- ***Good Communication.*** For genuine communication, there must be an understanding of the emotional, mental and physical differences between men and women. There must be companionship. "I'd rather be with my spouse than with anyone else." There must be conversation, not only discussion of differences when such arise, but a meaningful exchange on the intellectual and emotional levels.
- ***Time and Effort.*** Love must be given the opportunity to mature. The climate for this is set in God's Word. When the going gets rough, a couple just doesn't "fall out of love"; they stay together and work things out. They do not consider themselves as martyrs of a "bad bargain," but *"heirs together of the grace of life"* (1 Peter 3:7). *"Each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband"* (Ephesians 5:33, NIV).

The Seven Ages Of The Married Cold

Several years ago, the Saturday Evening Post had an article entitled, "The Seven Ages of the Married Cold". It revealed the reaction of a husband to his wife's colds during their first seven years of marriage, It went something like this:

The First Year: "Sugar dumpling, I'm really worried about my baby girl. You've got a bad snuffle and there's no telling about these things with all this strep going around. I'm putting you in the hospital this afternoon for a general checkup and a good rest. I know the food's lousy, but I'll be bringing your meals in from Rossini's. I've already got it all arranged with the floor superintendent."

The Second Year: "Listen darling, I don't like the sound of that cough. I called Doc Miller and asked him to rush over here, now you go to bed like a good girl, please? just for papa."

The Third Year: "Maybe you'd better lie down, honey; nothing like a little rest when you feel lousy, I'll bring you something to eat. Have you got any canned soup?"

The Fourth Year: "Now look dear, be sensible. After you've fed the kids, washed the dishes, and finished the floor, you'd better lie down."

The Fifth Year: "Why don't you take a couple of aspirin?"

The Sixth Year: "I wish you'd just gargle or something, instead of sitting around all evening barking like a seal!"

The Seventh Year: "For Pete's sake, stop sneezing! Are you trying to give me pneumonia?"

The decline of marriage as seen through the common cold. a funny look at a not so funny reality.