

God's Purpose For Marriage

A couple asked for counseling some years ago. They claimed that they were Christians and said they had sought God's will before getting married. It is interesting what you learn when people start talking to you about their marital situation. One of the things they shared with me was that they had slept together before they got married because they wanted to make sure they were compatible in every way. They stated that every indicator, as far as they were concerned, revealed their marriage would be really great. After some years of marriage and three children, they were now in counseling.

She complained that her husband was verbally abusive. She said she was unloved and that he wasted their money. He was critical of the way she looked physically. There were some imperfections in her body. He made that very clear to her, as well as to me. He consequently avoided having any kind of physical relations with her at all. In short, they were at war with one another. Both of them felt that they had

married the wrong person.

Couples are forever saying that, "I married the wrong person. We should have never married. All that we are experiencing is proof that we should have never married." It is just fascinating to find that almost every time I counsel someone, that is usually the conclusion they have come to: they married the wrong person.

I would like to say that the issue is not that they married the wrong person. The issue is they have the wrong view of marriage. Dr. Norman Wright, a marriage, family and child therapist said,

"Years ago I found a statement that sums up this issue very well. At first we were concerned about meeting the right one to marry. Now we are learning how important it is to be the right one for someone else to marry. If you treat the wrong person like the right person, you could have married the right person after all. On the



Weddings Rings Symbolize Marriage Between a Man and His Wife

other hand, if you treat the right person like the wrong person, you most likely married the wrong person. I also know that it is far more important to be the right person than it is to marry the right person. In short, whether you married the right or the wrong person is primarily up to you. It is how you are treating that person that makes all the difference.

That is something to think about. Did you marry the wrong person? Maybe you did. You certainly did if your definition of the right person is someone who always understands you, inspires your passions, entertains you, reduces your loneliness, appreciates you, makes you feel good about yourself—in short, meets your expectations. After an intense and disappointing disagreement with his wife, one man expressed his frustration by saying, “Mary, you are not the woman I thought I married.” She looked at him with a slight smile and said, “I never was the woman you thought you married.” Are any of us the person our spouse thought they married? Some individuals marry a phantom or a dream, and then throughout their marriage they continue to chase that illusion.

Many couples are surprised by marriage. Were you? Regardless of why you married, the fact remains that you are married. Every couple encounters surprises in marriage. We can either allow the surprises to totally throw us, or we can use them as growth opportunities and make adjustments. Reality sets in once you are married, but you should not think of it as being synonymous with trouble or disappointment. Instead, you should think of reality as the potential for making new discoveries and developing flexibility and protection against stagnation within a marriage relationship. In some sense, we all chose a wrong person to marry, because there is something wrong with all of us. We are created in God’s image, but at the same time we are afflicted with the same fatal condition. The truth that we are born sinful has become politically incorrect, but the evidence is too strong to ignore. We are flawed and broken. We are all wrong people.

You can understand this. It would be easy to label your spouse as the wrong person in your marriage. However,

you have also been wrong when you contributed to any alienation in your relationship. You both need to work on the sin in your lives in the hope that someday your marriage can get better, and in the knowledge that whatever the outcome, God can make you more caring and sensitive, more humble and prayerful. Work toward wholeness and holiness. It is a life and marriage changer.

Norman Wright was correct. Who did you marry? Did you marry the right person or the wrong person? His message is: it really depends on you—not exclusively—there is always the exception. But almost always it really depends on you.

I want to talk about God’s view of marriage in this study—not our culture’s view of what marriage is all about. This week I looked up several dictionary definitions of “marriage.” Miriam Webster’s dictionary defines marriage like this:

“The state of being united to a person of the opposite sex as husband or wife in a consensual and contractual relationship recognized by law.”

That is a matter-of-fact statement about marriage. It is basically contractual and consensual between two people. That is one definition of marriage. Another dictionary said it like this:

“A legally recognized relationship established by a civil or religious ceremony between two people who intend to live together as sexual and domestic partners.”

Unfortunately, both definitions leave some big gaps. To be specific, when it talks about relationships as a husband or wife or as sexual partners, the definitions do not make any distinction between heterosexual and same-sex marriage. They do not state that marriage is reserved for only a female and a male. The dictionary definitions are not biblical because they do not include enough details about the purpose of marriage. What is interesting about both the definitions is they miss the real purpose of marriage.

What Is the Purpose of Marriage?

Do you understand the real purpose of marriage? Is it to make money? Is it security? Is marriage just about love? Is it about love? Is marriage about sex? Is it to provide an escape from your parents? I know some people get married to escape their parents. Why do people get married?

Well, I have heard more than one person say that they did not marry for love; they married for lust. I was a little shocked, a little stunned that a person would be quite that blunt about it. One man told his wife, "I did not marry you because I loved you. I married you because I lusted for you." Another person half-jokingly said it was a temporary lapse of judgment; that is why he got married.

God's Purpose For Marriage. Scripture reveals that God has a specific purpose for marriage that is different than the things we just mentioned. You may have thought I had already mentioned the true purpose for marriage. In fact, I have not yet mentioned God's purpose for marriage. Many believe that love is the reason you marry. If you go to the Old Testament and look at why people got married, love was not usually one of the reasons given.

Marriage was not designed primarily for us to enjoy sex and to have babies. Marriage was not designed for us to be able to receive welfare payments and to increase those payments by having more children.

So what is the purpose of marriage? Why should people get married? God's answer is found in Genesis 2, beginning in verse 15. In the first part of Genesis 2, there is a recap of the creation of man on day 6 of the account in Genesis 1. Genesis 2:7 says:

Then the LORD God formed man of the dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being. Genesis 2:7 (NASB)

So in verse 7 we are told that man was created. In verse 8 we are told that the Lord planted a garden and then created man. Now let us go to verse 15, where we are told,

Then the LORD God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it. Genesis

2:15 (NASB)

The man was put there for an express purpose - to cultivate and keep the Garden. That means he was a gardener who worked in and kept the garden. There are some of you who love to work in the garden. Personally, I have pollen allergies and I do not get along too well doing yard work. But Adam's job and his responsibility was to cultivate and to care for the Garden of Eden.

Now, the Garden of Eden did not cover the entire globe. It was confined to a local area. We do not know how large it was. We only know that it was a specific garden for which Adam was to care. Verse 16 says:

The LORD God commanded the man, saying, "From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; Genesis 2:16 (NASB)

That tells us he would not have enjoyed Thanksgiving with a turkey, because he was supposed to be vegetarian, eating vegetables and fruits. If you look at Genesis 1:29, we are told that God had previously said,

... "Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the surface of all the earth, and every tree which has fruit yielding seed; it shall be food for you;" Genesis 1:29 (NASB)

So Adam was a vegetarian. As I was thinking about this, I could not help but be reminded of what it was like when I first got married. At one point during our engagement period, I told Rachel that now that I was an adult on my own, I was not eating any vegetables because I did not like vegetables. She reminded me that it was good for me to eat vegetables. Then she said, "What will it be like if we have children who need to eat vegetables to be healthy and Dad does not eat any vegetables? All of a sudden it made me think!

So my wife put sauces on the vegetables, and she did all kinds of different things to make the vegetables taste really good. She did a good job! So guess what I did? I ate the

vegetables! As I was thinking further about vegetables, I began to wonder what the vegetables in the Garden of Eden were like? They must have been spectacular. Think about the taste of spinach and the cauliflower before the Fall!

Some people do not like Brussels sprouts (I do). What would it be like to have a perfect Brussels sprout, a perfect cauliflower, or a perfect ear of corn? Can you not just imagine? For those of you who have had gardens and raised your own vegetables, you know your homegrown vegetables are better than anything in the grocery store. Now just imagine what it would have been like in the Garden of Eden. That must have been a delightful place to be! So Adam had a responsibility to take care of the garden and all of the plants that were there.

Genesis 2:17 says,

But from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you shall surely die.” Genesis 2:17 (NASB)

God told Adam he could eat from everything there except from one tree. He could not even touch it! It was the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Do you realize what that means? That means Adam was responsible for taking care of all of the vegetation in the garden. He was a busy man. He was in a perfect garden. How would you like to take care of a perfect garden and eat its perfect fruit and vegetables?

Verse 18 says:

Then the LORD God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him.” Genesis 2:18 (NASB)

God knew that it was not good for Adam to be alone. It was not good enough just to be busy. I know some people who say, “Well, I do not need a spouse because I have too much to do. I am a very busy, person.” Adam was busy but God said, “It is not good for you to be alone.”

Adam Should Not Be Alone. God knew something that Adam may not have yet known. Adam was not like any of the animals in the garden because they had

mates. Adam was not a product of evolution. Now if he had evolved from monkeys, perhaps a monkey could have been his friend. There was a tremendous variety of different animals living with Adam. In that perfect world, they may have been able to communicate with Adam and with each other. I personally believe that animals spoke a language that Adam could understand. Genesis 3 states that the snake spoke to Eve. There were lots of different animals, but God said that it was not good for Adam to be alone.

In many ways Adam was not alone, but God said he was alone because only the man had been created in the image of God. Genesis 1: 26 says,

Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, ... Genesis 1:26 (NASB)

That means that Adam had a will. He had emotions, an intellect, and a spirit as God did. None of the animals were like Adam. Adam was unique because in some ways he was like God. God did not create another god. He created someone who in some ways was like Him. But there was no one else in the garden who was like Adam. God’s conclusion was, “It is not good for man to be alone.”

I looked at the Hebrew word for alone. It means bad and it means “only one,” or “alone,” or “empty.” “Empty” gives you a flavor of the word. It gives the idea that there was something empty or missing in Adam’s life. So God said, “It is not good for Adam to be alone” and to meet his need, God created a helper for him.

Role of a Helper. The word “helper” in the Hebrew is *ezer*. It just really means “one who helps.” I could not help but think about my wife and the vegetables. My wife helped me learn to enjoy eating vegetables. That was a good thing for me to do. She helped me in an area in which I was blind and needed some help. People often think of one who is a helper as filling a demeaning role.

I find it interesting in church settings when it comes to helping set up or doing the manual labor needed, often the leaders stand to the side talking about leadership issues while everyone else is doing whatever physical work is needed for that particular occasion.

I find it interesting how often leaders feel they are above assisting with the routine manual work. Sometimes there is a physical or legitimate reason; but you understand what I am communicating. We have this idea that being the helper is somehow demeaning. Well did you know that God uses the word *ezer*, three times in the Old Testament for Himself? He speaks of Himself as being a helper! Now if that word is demeaning, then God just demeaned Himself.

When God helps me, I do not think that is demeaning. Since God helps others all the time, why should I not be quick to help? If you are interested in scriptural support for this truth, look at Psalm 33:20, Psalm 70:5, and Psalm 115:9. You will find that God uses the same term to refer to Himself as one who helps.

Role of a Suitable Helper. Now the Hebrew word here in Genesis 2:18 that is translated as “suitable” comes from another Hebrew word, *neged*, and it means “corresponding to.” I want you to focus on this for a few minutes. God says that Adam needs a helper who is suitable to, or corresponds to him. What do you think are the characteristics of a helper who would correspond to Adam? What does it mean that she would correspond to him? I think the best illustration is a jigsaw puzzle.

Many of us have tried to put together a jigsaw puzzle. You have a bunch of pieces, and they all have different shapes. Can I make a point without insulting anyone? Husband, if you look at your wife, she does not look like you. She is a different shape compared to you, but she is part of the “jigsaw puzzle” of your life. The flip side is true. Husbands look a little weird to wives, and wives look a little different to husbands. We are all different!

In truth, we all know that we are different. But what God has done, is God has made men and women much more complex than just a jigsaw puzzle with its varied pieces. There is a lot of complexity to us. God made a helper for us who is like the completion of a jigsaw picture. You fit the pieces together and you end up with a complete picture. Do you know what this means?

The first truth is that a man and his wife are not identical. That is the number one point; that the wife is not going to be identical to the husband. She corresponds to him; she has

a different role. That is an important point.

There is an old adage, and a true one: opposites attract. It is opposite characteristics that draw us to one another. One person may be weak and another person strong for an example. One of you may be organized and the other one is disorganized. One of you is talkative and the other one is quiet. One of you is patient and the other one is impatient. One of you has high energy, and one of you has low energy. Does that sound familiar? Or how about the fact that one of you is people focused and the other one of you is task focused? It is really interesting how opposites attract.

We have these differences in our relationships. I have been married to Rachel long enough now that I know where I am weak and she is strong; and I look to her to help me. Do you understand the message? We are helpers who correspond to one another. She helps me, and I help her. There may be many differences.

Helpers Correspond To One Another. But do you know what happens in marriage? Somewhere along the line—and it happens in every marriage—we want the other person to be just like us. But God did not make you just like one another. God made us to be different and to correspond, to help one another. So one of you is strong, and one of you is weak in a particular area.

What happens in relationships is that at times the one who is strong in a particular area criticizes and is unhappy with the person who is weak in that area, and vice versa. When that happens, we are starting to destroy what God built into the relationship. God made us to correspond, to help the other partner when we are strong and our spouse is weak, so that together we both are strong! But when we start criticizing one another because we want the other person to be just like us, we are destroying the relationship, and we are not strong together.

There is an old proverb that says two cords are strong, but three are even better. The point is that God recognized that Adam was alone and needed help. I was wondering how do you need help in the Garden of Eden that was in a perfect state? Just companionship was one area. God knew that before Adam did and so planned to make him a helper who corresponded to him, to help him in his weakness. Adam

also proved to be a companion and a helper for Eve in her weaknesses.

A relationship, once a marriage occurs, is a couple together, helping one another. I would like to encourage you when you see your spouse being different than you, to stop and ask yourself why. It may be that their strength is compensating for one of your weaknesses, and where they are weak is where God has called you to be strong and to help them. Together you are complete; together you are like a jigsaw puzzle that has been all assembled. Because we are imperfect sinners, our need is even greater. Unfortunately, many tend to war with their spouse. I do not think Adam and Eve did that before the Fall, but it is clearly what has happened since the Fall.

Gifts in the Church Are Like Marriage Helpers. Relationships in the Church are similar. God gives spiritual gifts to believers to be used in the body of Christ and in His church. Some believers have the gift of helps, some the gift of teaching, and some the gift of giving, for examples.

No one person is equally gifted with all of the spiritual gifts. The Church is like a marriage. Some are weaker in one of the spiritual gifts while others are stronger but together we are complete. I am not perfect. Any one who has been around me long enough, knows I have weaknesses. God may have given me the gift of teaching, but I am not perfect. In the church we need one another - just like in a marriage relationship.

For those of you who are single, this is not supposed to send a message to you that you need to go out and get married. That is not the message, because even Paul in 1 Corinthians 7 talked about the fact that God has given some of us the gift of remaining single. Some of us God super enables to not need to marry. But that does not mean that you do not need a friend. It does not mean you can wing it on your own. We all need friends. All of us need someone to help us. But marriage is a unique institution that God has designed where we are to come together like a jigsaw puzzle, where we complete one another.

God Made the Suitable Helper for Adam. Look at verse 19 which says,

Out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the sky, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called a living creature, that was its name. Genesis 2:19 (NASB)

Here God demonstrated to Adam that he needed some help. God was demonstrating to Adam something he had not yet realized. He was alone and he needed a helper suitable for him.

Verse 20 says:

The man gave names to all the cattle, and to the birds of the sky, and to every beast of the field, but for Adam there was not found a helper suitable for him. Genesis 2:20 (NASB)

This was an opportunity for Adam to observe it all. Adam was able to see that none of the animals qualified as a suitable helper for him. So what did God do?

Verse 21 says:

So 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 at that place. Genesis 2:21 (NASB)

I call that the divine anesthesia. God was the first anesthesiologist and surgeon. The next verse says,

The LORD God fashioned into a woman the rib which He had taken from the man, and brought her to the man. Genesis 2:22 (NASB)

God took a rib. The actual Hebrew word is *selā*. *Selā* has the idea of “from the side”. In other words, God did not take from the head so that she would then dominate him. God did not take from his feet so that he could then walk on her. But God took her from his side. It fits the whole picture of a helper suitable or corresponding to, just like him. He created a woman.

Verse 23 says,

The man 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.” Genesis 2:23
(NASB)

The Hebrew word for “woman” is interesting. It is *issa*. The Hebrew word for “man” is *is*. In essence, two extra letters are added to create “woman” from “man”. *Issa* means “fragile” or “weak.” Compared to man, who is usually associated with “strength” (or hard and muscular). He named her “fragile” or “weak”. That is his opposite. That was the idea. That was Adam’s name for woman, “fragile” or “weak” or *issa*.

God created a woman, a helper, who was suitable for Adam. Verses 24 and 25 say:

For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh. And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed. Genesis 2:24-25 (NASB)

Review of Some Key Points. Now here is a review question: Why did God create marriage? Adam was alone. Adam needed company. The reason for marriage is not for just sex, which many in our culture thinks. Marriage is not for a whole list of issues. God planned for marriage so that we are not alone. That is the primary purpose of marriage. It is not good for women to be alone. It is not good for men to be alone - unless God has given you a supernatural enablement to make that possible. God does that at unique times in our life. For some of us, it is an ongoing capability that God has given to us (1 Corinthians 7).

Watch this—marriage is a team, helping, complementing one another. Procreation or bringing children into this world is also part of that marriage bond. But I want to show you a very important passage as we close this study.

Turn with me to Malachi 2:14, which has a very interesting Hebrew word that I want to point out to you. We are told the following,

Yet you say, ‘For what reason?’ Because the LORD has

been a witness between you and the wife of your youth, against whom you have dealt treacherously, though she is your companion and your wife by covenant. Malachi 2:14 (NASB)

That verse says two things. It says that the wife is given by covenant. That means by contractual agreement. But did you notice the part where it says she is your “companion?” That word means “partner.” There is a feeling of magic to this relationship. There is something more than just a friendship in a marriage relationship. It is like magic, and that is what marriage is to be about. That is what God created in Genesis 2 when He created *issa*, “fragile”, and they got married in the garden.

Now here is a question: What is the purpose of marriage? Companionship. That is what it is all about. And time and again when I go to a hospital or hospice and am talking with one spouse when the other spouse is dying, do you know what I hear?

I never hear them tell me that they are really going to be sorry that they are not going to have sex. I never ever find that either one of them is talking about the fact that there are going to be issues of financial security. What they always are communicating is the loss of a friend whom they have known for so many years, someone with whom they have spent most of their life.

Marriage is about a friendship, a relationship. It is in the early part of the marriage where all the adjustments and getting used to one another is worked out. Later on, it is an ever deepening friendship. Watch this—they are helpers corresponding to one another, helping each other, like a jigsaw puzzle that comes together to make a picture complete.

For those of you who are single, I would just like to say, remember, God will help you. If God wants you to get married, He will bring the right person along; but until that time, ask God to give you a supernatural enablement. The basic principles that we are talking about here with regard to marriage apply even to friendship relationships. The challenge is to find someone to connect with as a friend, someone with whom you can go through life. I do not mean

that you live together; but every one of us needs friends.