

God's Design for Marriage (Gen 2:18-25)

Preached by Pastor Phil Layton at Gold Country Baptist Church on October 14, 2007

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Deuteronomy 6

1 Now these are the commandments, the statutes, and the judgments, which the LORD your God commanded to teach you, that ye might do them in the land whither ye go to possess it:

2 That thou mightest fear the LORD thy God, to keep all his statutes and his commandments, which I command thee, thou, and thy son, and thy son's son, all the days of thy life; and that thy days may be prolonged.

3 Hear therefore, O Israel, and observe to do it; that it may be well with thee, and that ye may increase mightily, as the LORD God of thy fathers hath promised thee, in the land that floweth with milk and honey.

4 Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD:

5 And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.

6 And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart:

7 And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.

When Jesus was asked what is the first and greatest commandment, he began quoting with verse 4. Before declaring what we are to do (love the Lord) God begins by declaring who He is. This is the same way the Ten Commandments begin, not first with declaring what we are to do, but declaring first and foremost and fundamentally who God is ("I am the Lord your God").

Deuteronomy 6 is one of the most important passages in all the Bible on the family and parenting. Of course the fabric and foundation of this begins with the marriage relationship, which is also the fabric and foundation and central institution upon which both churches and societies depend. So we will spend another week looking at the fundamental truths in God's Word on marriage. In our day and age there is a lot written about families and parenting and marriage and relationships, but in God's revelation, this does not have first place or highest priority. Before the marriage and family, we must know who God is, in all the fullness and attributes and glory He is presented in scripture, and our affections and exclusive love for Him is, according to Jesus, the greatest command: "*Hear O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is one*"

Since Old Testament times and even to this day, this verse has been recited by pious Jews twice daily and read at every synagogue meeting in Hebrew. This God who they were called to love with all their being is revealed fundamentally as being "one."

This Hebrew word *echad* means "one" in the sense of "unity"

Every religious Jew would know this verse by heart and many would also be very familiar with the first time this word "one" was used in Torah

Gen 2:24 *For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife and the two shall become one*

This oneness of two persons is the fundamental truth of marriage, and that phrase is quoted 4x in the N.T. and perhaps alluded to in the O.T. as well (Malachi 2:15). Eph 5 quotes this verse and says marriage is a mystery that is really about Christ and His church.

This fundamental oneness of God, using the same Hebrew word, we later learn is similarly a unity and oneness that allows for more than one person (which we as Christians understand as the Trinity). And the first picture or illustration of the nature of God is revealed in the institution of marriage that God created to reflect His glory

1 Cor. 11:3 “the head of woman is man, and the head of God is Christ”

There is a direct analogy and correlation between the Trinitarian relationship of Father and Son and the relationship of husband and wife, with the man as head, equal with her yet different in role. The Father and Son’s eternal relationship with each other and with the Holy Spirit has existed from all eternity, among themselves there has always been love and happiness. And God created marriage to a reflection of His glory and relationship with Himself

A dozen or so of us from GCBC got to hear John Piper this weekend speaking on the Pleasures of God, which were some of the most refreshing and mesmerizing messages I’ve heard focusing attention on the supremacy of God and the pleasure He has always had in Himself and His works. He reminded us biblically that God did not need to create you or me or this world or anything, but the scriptures seem to reveal that the reason God did create in Genesis is because of His glory and His desire to go public with His glory and His name, overflowing His joy in the universe to creatures. [Click here to listen to the messages online from the conference.](#)

The Bible says explicitly God created us for His glory and whatever we do whether food or drink, certainly marriage as well – all is to be to the glory of God. To say it another way, the chief end of *marriage* is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.

God created man in Genesis 1 in His image, male and female, to be fruitful and multiply and represent His character and fill the earth with His glory. And one of the primary ways God has ordained to display His glory and who He is on this earth is through marriage. God intentionally created marriage for the same main reason that He ultimately does everything – for His own glory and pleasure. We must live in marriage for His pleasure and glory as well if we will ever experience the satisfaction and happiness God intends.

So before we talk about marriage, I want to talk about God. The spiritual health of any marriage, family, individual, or church is dependent on its view of God, and will rise or fall depending on its conception of God. To whatever degree we are centered on God we will experience blessing and happiness, and on the other hand, to whatever degree we are centered on anything less than God or seeking happiness and satisfaction in anything other than God and His Word, we will

experience futility and emptiness (cf. Rom 3:23 and 1:23)

If God is not the weighty, all-glorious, all-sufficient, all-consuming center of our lives, all the right talk of the importance of marriage or the home will be mere talk.

John Piper has edited an excellent book I put on our website called *A God-Entranced View of All Things: The Legacy of Jonathan Edwards*. The prince of Puritan theologians is described this way:

‘What Edwards saw in God and in the universe because of God, through the lens of Scripture, was breathtaking. To read him, after you catch your breath, is to breathe the uncommon air of the Himalayas ... this high, clear, God-entranced air ... When Jonathan Edwards became still and knew that God is God, the vision before his eyes was of an absolutely sovereign God, self-sufficient in himself and all-sufficient for his creatures, infinite in holiness, and therefore perfectly glorious ... always motivated by the passion to display his glorious sufficiency (which is infinite). He does everything that he does—absolutely everything—for the sake of displaying his glory.

Our duty and privilege, therefore, is to conform to this divine purpose in creation and history and redemption—namely, to reflect the value of God’s glory—to think and feel and do whatever we must to make much of God. Our reason for being, our calling, our joy is to render visible the glory of God.

Edwards writes:

All that is ever spoken of in the Scripture as an ultimate end of God’s works is included in that one phrase, *the glory of God*. . . . The refulgence shines upon and into the creature, and is reflected back to the luminary. The beams of glory come from God, and are something of God and are refunded back again to their original. So that the whole is *of God*, and *in God*, and *to God*, and God is the beginning, middle and end in this affair.’ [p. 22-23]

So this is the foundation – first and last, foremost is that God be glorified in our home. I believe that with all my heart and want to apply that quote to marriage: “Our reason for being, our calling, our joy is to render visible the glory of God” [in marriage]. Something a lot bigger than *us* is at stake in how we understand our roles as husbands and wives, the greatest reality in the universe is to be on display. There’s something far more important than our comfort and desires and perceived rights in marriage – marriage exists to manifest and magnify the glory of God to the world.

The various pagan nations around and before and after Israel had their own creation stories, myths about how man and woman came about, but none of their neighbors had a separate account of the creation of the female. It is only in the biblical presentation that ‘the woman is not subsumed under her male counterpart.’¹

Man’s celebration of the creation of woman and her significance – her nobility, dignity, and calling as equal image-bearer of God and vital partner to her husband – this emphasis and view of woman is not found in any other ancient Near Eastern texts.² It’s God’s view.

Last week, we discussed how God made woman equal with man in many ways, but God also made her different from man in her role:

- The Husband is to lead and love like Christ
- The Wife is to follow and submit humbly like Christ
- The Man has a great responsibility as head of the marriage and family, and his wife is to be his suitable helper and support and complement, not undermining or usurping him

In the excellent book, *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Woman*, male headship is defined this way: ‘In the partnership of two spiritually equal human beings, man and woman, the man bears the primary responsibility to lead the partnership in a God-glorifying direction. The model of headship is our Lord, the Head of the church, who gave Himself for us. The antithesis to male headship is male domination ... the assertion of the man’s will over the woman’s will, heedless of her ...’³ A husband is responsible before God to be sensitive to his wife in an understanding way, and sacrificial toward his wife, but is still the head of the home and the man of the house, the responsible one for final decision-making.

Of course the real test in submission is not when you agree, but when you disagree – after you’ve discussed and shared your view, wives, do you keep badgering your husband endlessly till you get your way? Can you think of times recently where you’ve discussed an issue extensively and disagreed, but submitted as to the Lord?

Wives or husbands, if you have been abdicating and departing from your roles, it’s time to repent and seek forgiveness from God and your spouse for your failings and strive to work together to live up to God’s standards which are for His glory and your benefit.

We see in v. 18 God know what is good and not good for Adam, and the clear lesson is that God knows what is good for man and marriage today as well. He lays down the rules He does so not to be a kill-joy but to provide us true joy and fulfillment as He intends

Last week we also noticed that the N.T. teaches that God created woman *after man* also as a model or pattern of spiritual instruction and leadership, not just in the home, but in the church as well (1 Timothy 2:11-13) – men are to be the spiritual leaders / teachers in the church.

James Boice points out correctly that the spheres in which scripture speaks of headship and submission are the family and in the church (which by deliberate divine parallel is also a family, family of God)

‘Nothing in Genesis implies that every woman is to exist for every man, still less be obedient to him. Moreover, even in the case of marriage the submission involved is voluntary. No woman is obliged to accept a proposal. But if she does and she is a Christian woman, she must know that the pattern for her relationship to that man is found in Genesis 2 where God said that he would make a “helper

suitable for” Adam. If she cannot be a helper to her man or does not want to be, the woman should not marry her man.’⁴

There were two other points we didn’t get to last week – God made woman FROM THE MAN, and He also made her FOR HER MAN

First, God made woman FROM THE MAN

1 Cor. 11:7-8 says “... *the woman is the glory of man, for man does not originate from woman, but woman from man*”

Paul uses this principle in Corinthians to illustrate headship and submission. In Ephesians Paul says that the man is not only to lead but is also to love his wife as his own body. Adam was the original prototype for this, of course – he viewed his wife as his own body (flesh and bone even) because she was in fact from his own body.

Gen 2:21-23 *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. The LORD God fashioned into a woman the rib which He had taken from the man, and 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, Because she was taken out of Man."*

There’s a play on words in verse 23 – “she shall be called woman [Hebrew *ishah*] because she was taken **from man** [*ish*]”

The closeness of name represents closeness of relationship

The word for “rib” in v. 21-22 is never translated “rib” elsewhere in the Bible – it is usually translated “side” (of a building, room, ark of covenant, or a ridge or terrace on a hill). The *New English Translation* may have the sense when it translates “part of his side” – this fits with v. 23 and would include bone and flesh as Adam said, and probably blood as well, when the side was opened.

It is hard to resist the analogy some commentators make of the second Adam, whose side was also opened on the cross:

‘on Calvary as He entered the “deep sleep” of death, of whose body not a bone was broken, but from whose side “ ... came there out blood and water” (John 19:34-36). From the “life” of Adam (the blood sustaining his bones and his flesh) God made Eve, his bride. In like manner, we who constitute the “bride of Christ” (II Corinthians 11:2) have received life by His blood (John 6:54-56). Thereby we become “members of his body, of his flesh and of his bones” (Ephesians 5:30) ... When God had finished forming Eve, He “brought her unto the man,” to be with him from that time forth. In like manner, God is now forming a bride for Christ (Acts 15:14), as it were

“building up the body” (Ephesians 4:11-16). When this work is finished, God will bring His bride to the Lord Jesus and He will go to meet her, and she will be evermore joined to the Lord (John 14:2, 3; 1 Thess. 4:16-17, Rev. 19:7-9, 21:1-4).’⁵

And this marriage of Christ and His bride is not “till death do we part” – Revelation says there will be no more death and those who are in Christ as His bride will never part from His love.

Just as God rested on the seventh day after finishing the work of creation, God the Son finished His work of redemption, He rested in the tomb on the Sabbath, then rose on the first day of the week.

Eve was created from Adam’s body, from his side

Matthew Henry wrote: "not made out of his head to rule over him, nor out of his feet to be trampled upon by him, but out of his side to be equal with him, under his arm to be protected, and near his heart to be beloved"

God made woman not only from but FOR HER MAN

1 Corinthians 11:9 (NASB95)

9 for indeed man was not created for the woman’s sake, but woman for the man’s sake.

I say “for *HER* man” on this point because this context is marriage. God makes woman for her man, her husband. God ordains and designs this relationship to be one of completion and companionship – this view of marriage is called complementarian.

Solomon said in Ecclesiastes (4:9-10) that two are better than one, because one can lift or help the other when in need

The word “helper” or “helpmate” in v. 18 and 20 has been much misunderstood. This is not the Hebrew term for a slave or even an inferior (although those ideas about women were common in pagan societies), it’s usually a term for someone who willingly condescends from a position to assist someone in need. In fact, 16 of the other 18x it is used in the Old Testament it refers to God as the “helper” of mankind – of course, God is not inferior or lower than man, but He graciously voluntarily stoops to serve and to help man. The wife, as made in God’s image, reflects God Himself when she fulfills her role as helper to her husband, not one who *asserts* herself and her rights or authority, but one who *assists* him in fulfilling his God-given role. There is no more noble or high calling that one who serves or helps another, as Jesus taught, the one who serves is not the least but is instead the greatest. Of course, in God’s eyes, neither husband nor wife is superior or inferior in value, we simply have different roles or function. The man is the head, the wife is the helpmate.

The Holy Spirit has the title of Comforter, and He is also called our “Helper.” One way wives can exemplify and reflect the image of God in them is by helping their husbands, not dominating the home or nagging or criticizing or insulting or undermining him, but by encouraging and

being a comforter who *helps* her man be all he can be.

Some incorrectly think this term “helper” is a negative comment about women, but it really speaks about man and the help he needs, as he is inadequate and incomplete alone. If anyone's pride should be offended by this term it should be men, not women. But any spiritual man doesn't protest against this word because we know it's true we do need help.

The pastor who married Jaime and me pointed out during our ceremony this principle. He said “Adam couldn't even make it through the first day of his life before God saw that He needed some help.” That's true – of course, it's no surprise to God, but is by His design. Both man and wife are necessary in God's plan.

God Made Marriage as a Gift for Lifelong Union

Gen 2:18-20 Then the LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him." 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. 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.

In reflecting on this passage, I was struck how God knows man's need for companionship but rather than just tell Adam or solve the problem right away, He does something different for the first time. Throughout Genesis 1, God says “let there be” and it happens, or “let us make.” In verse 18, though, God says “I will make a helper suitable” but He doesn't do it instantly. He has man go through a long process that undoubtedly took several hours. Rather than God just tell Adam what He needs, God wants to show him his need in v. 19 with the animals God “had formed” (ESV).⁶ There's a suspense, a hold-up, where we are to feel his loneliness and lack.

God wants Adam to discover His need as God parades a long line of creatures before him to name them, which probably continued from morning into much of the afternoon. The fact that Adam gives names to all of them shows the God-given authority that has been delegated to man, and is no doubt part of God's image and mandate for image-bearers to have dominion over the creatures. But is zoology the main point? Of course, it's more than that.

Most likely each creature came as male and female in pairs, like when God led the animals to the ark by two's. After the first few hundred like that, you would notice a pattern: every creature has a partner. When will I see a creature who is my perfect partner?

Most of day six is spent with Adam naming animal after animal, each which has a corresponding companion, he and she, equal yet different - but at the end of v. 20 and near the end of the day it's painfully obvious he hasn't found a suitable companion for him! Adam by now is realizing it's not good for him to be alone and that he needs a suitable companion and helpmate. God is gracious to us at times like this when He shows us and helps us discover our lack and need so

that we grow through the process and learn what God wants us to learn. There's an important lesson here.

In v. 21, God takes the initiative and puts Adam to sleep so that the man is completely passive while God goes about to meet this need of man and God reveals His grace in His provision.

There's other notable times in Genesis when God puts man asleep for an important lesson or He can initiate a covenant or relationship that provides for man. In Genesis 15, when God promises Abraham the land and affirms His covenant, God puts Abraham in a "deep sleep" and God and God alone passed through the pieces of the sacrifice, representing a unilateral unconditional covenant.

Later in Genesis 28, Jacob also is asleep as God initiates and reveals to him important truth through the dream and vision of heaven (Jacob's ladder, angels ascending, descending). God reaffirms to man as the passive and unconscious spectator, God's covenant promise to Him. God initiates the relationship.

Marriage is also seen as a covenant or relationship initiated by God, so it's very appropriate that God with Adam determines His need, how He will fill that need, and what this covenant of marriage should be like.

The terms "leaving" and "cleaving" in v. 24 are used in covenant contexts in the O.T. and this covenant concept of marriage continues in the middle of the O.T. and to the end of the O.T.

Proverbs 2:17 describes the married adulterer as one that "leaves the companion of her youth and forgets the covenant of her God"

From Genesis 2 to Proverbs 2 to Malachi 2, the last book in the O.T. as well as the first book in the O.T. holds up God's design for marriage, speaking of this permanent covenant and companionship and also God's purpose to reproduce godly offspring.

God speaks directly to husbands that His wrath is kindled and He is about to cut them off. Why?

Malachi 2:14-16 (NKJV)

14 ... 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.**

15 But **did He not make them one.** Having a remnant of the Spirit? And **why one? He seeks godly offspring.** "Therefore take heed to your spirit, And let none deal treacherously with the wife of his youth.

16 "For the Lord God of Israel says That **He hates divorce,** For it covers one's garment with violence," Says the Lord of hosts. Therefore take heed to your spirit, That you do not deal treacherously."

Notice in both Proverbs and Malachi that the male or female spouse is referred to as companion and covenant partner. God makes them one, and one of the purposes is to multiply God's image through godly offspring. God is not just concerned about divorce in this passage, He twice tells men to take heed to their spirit and to never deal treacherously with his wife.

From the last book of the OT to the first book of the NT, the Lord holds the bar high for

marriage. The NT does not teach that it's more spiritual or required of clergy that they be celibate as the RCC teaches – a church leader must be “husband of one wife”

Jesus held the bar high on marriage, not only teaching against adultery but even how devastating heart adultery and lust is and how radically we must deal with even those kinds of sins.

Jesus affirmed marriage. He celebrated a marriage with friends of his family and used that opportunity to perform His first miracle. He affirmed marriage as a gift for lifelong union and taught of its high and holy and abiding character in Matthew 5 and 19 – any legal marriage is joined by God and not to be put asunder – from the beginning, divorce was not to be an option for God's people.

Side note: God hates divorce, but that does not mean God hates divorced people. God's love for those in His family is unbreakable even though human relationships sometimes break. Divorce is not the unpardonable sin, any more than the adulterous woman whom Jesus forgave, or the adulterous murderer King David, who God forgave and still allowed to serve God in wonderful ways. But like with David, although fellowship with God was restored, there were long-term consequences and effects in his family that were not erased. In the same way, God offers His grace and a place in His body for those who have sinned greatly in the past but repented. Although some things cannot be undone, the response we all should have in whatever marital state we're in today (married, married to an unbeliever, divorced and/or remarried unbiblically) from this day forward, we will live our lives committed to our spouse till death, and now that we know the truth we will together seek to live by God's standard for marriage and by His grace we'll live by the vows and covenant we made before God and others.

But back to Adam, who we left asleep back in the garden. What a picture of God's work and gift to man. This is monergism (work of God alone), the first divine surgery is done, removing part of Adam's side and forming from him a perfect partner, companion, and helpmate. The word in v. 22 for God making the woman is literally “built” – “The verb *built* by its very definition implies beauty, stability, and durability. Working with clay, God is the potter. Working with body tissue, God is the builder. Eve thus becomes the first thing that is created from another living thing.”⁷

Out from Adam's side comes a sweetheart for Adam, a wife to be by his side, who in v. 22b, God brings to the man like the Father of the bride at this first wedding ever. It's true that God could have created woman right after Adam, but the way God created her was to make Adam all the more appreciative to God for his wife.

We get a sense of this in v. 23, where he erupts into spontaneous poetry and praise. (Most of your translations recognize this and indent it differently). This is the first words of man recorded and it is a song if not a shout. When he sees this beautiful person created from his side, one writer says Adam is “beside himself” with excitement (pardon the pun). The original has an excitement

Genesis 2:23 (ESV)

23 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.”

Another translation has “‘At last,’ the man exclaimed.” The idea is finally, this is one like me, from me, for me, one to be a part of me.

Picture the futility of spending hours, even a full work day observing how every other creature has its pair and that there is not suitable for you in that way. Then God puts you to sleep and wakes you up to present the most beautiful bride as a perfect match for your life.

Think of the emotion and excitement, guys, of your own marriage (if you're married), seeing your bride coming down the aisle, and multiply that in a world without sin where the fullest emotion of joy could have been expressed by Adam.

My professor Dr. Barrick says the 3 occurrences of the demonstrative pronoun at the beginning, middle, the end (this / she) serve as a climax and crescendo of emphasis on the woman in the Hebrew.

At Last!

This one is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh.

This one will be called ‘woman’ for from Man was taken

This one.

Adam says "WOW! **THIS** one, this time, Finally - **AT LAST!!** Someone on my level and likeness, bone of my bone, from my body and nature! Someone I can become one flesh with, united for life in every level of intimacy (physical, emotional, spiritual)."

I remember vividly our professor telling us in class at this point, “Men, this wedding day excitement, you need to keep constantly. If you lose this glow, it’s your fault [not hers, not God’s] ... You want to be with this one, you’re fist-pumping thrilled – this one – praising God for this one that He has given you.”

Marriage is a gift from God! He is the author and the inventor of it.
This is the relationship God intended and the response He intended

Prov 18:22 "He who finds a wife finds a good thing [or "a treasure"] and obtains favor from the Lord"

A good man’s wife is called “the delight of his eyes” (Ezek. 24:16)

Prov. 5:18 "Let your fountain be blessed and rejoice in the wife of your youth ... Be exhilarated always with her love."

God wants marriage to be monogamous, but not monotonous!

Ecc 9:9 "Enjoy life with the woman you love all the days of your fleeting life which He has given to you under the sun, for this is your reward in life ..."

¹ Victor P. Hamilton, *Genesis*, NICOT, 1:177.

² Allen P. Ross, *Creation and Blessing*, 127.

³ Ray Ortlund, “Male Female Equality and Male Headship: Genesis 1-3,” in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, John Piper and Wayne Grudem, editors, p. 95.

⁴ James M. Boice, *Genesis*, 1:133.

⁵ Henry Morris, *Genesis*, 100-101.

⁶ On why the past tense rendering “had formed” is best, see John C. Collins, *Genesis 1-4: A Linguistic, Literary, and Theological Commentary*, p. 134.

⁷ Hamilton, 1:179.