

Family Foundations, Part 2 – God’s Purposes for Marriage (Genesis 1-2)

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Genesis 1:26-31 (NASB95) ²⁶Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” ²⁷God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. ²⁸God blessed them; and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth.” ²⁹Then God 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; ³⁰and to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the sky and to every thing that moves on the earth which has life, *I have given* every green plant for food”; and it was so. ³¹God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

You could argue in one sense there’s multiple purposes of God for marriage, but tonight we’ll just look at *some* we see in Genesis 1-2. In another sense, God always has one *ultimate unifying* purpose; creating people is for His glory (Isa. 43:7, etc). God’s glory is not only the chief end of man (therefore marriage), but is also the aim of God, His main motive, His grand goal for all His creation, which Ps. 19 says declares the glory of God all the time everyday.

God created man and woman to glorify God in marriage by:

Purpose #1: Reflecting God’s glory and image in relationship

1 Corinthians 11:7 alludes to creation and says man “is the image and glory of God”

I trust you’re familiar with what God’s glory is and means, but not every believer has a good grasp of what God’s *image* is. Look at Genesis 1:27 again. It says God made man in His own image, male and female He created them. Both genders are made in the image of God; humanity alone in creation is in God’s image.

That’s why Genesis 9:6 says it is such a sin to murder a fellow human (as opposed to killing an animal) and James 3:9-10 says we must not even curse our fellow humans because they’re God’s image. So God’s image is not something that was erased by sin, but our sin *effects* negatively the way we *reflect* God’s image.

In the immediate context and wording of verse 26, we see man’s creation revealed differently with the personal pronouns God uses in creating man as opposed to other creatures (“us” and “our”). Also there’s a difference with the creation of animals, which Genesis 1 repeatedly says was “after their kind” – but now we have a creation of God after God’s kind or likeness and image.

When I say that marriage is to glorify God and reflect God’s glory and image, of course single men or women or children are equally in God’s image and can glorify God, too. 1 Corinthians 7 in fact talks about the benefits of singleness in serving the Lord, and Jesus obviously glorified God fully without ever being married. The non-married have unique and special ways they can devote themselves to God’s kingdom and glorifying God with less distractions.

But the Bible also indicates there is something very special about the relation of man and woman that Scripture communicates as a reflection of God's very likeness and relation.

1 Corinthians 11:3 But I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of a woman, and God is the head of Christ.

1 Corinthians 11:3 compares the relationship of man and woman to the relationship of God (the Father) with Christ. That's an important analogy, because Jesus is equal to God by nature and not inferior in His essence to the Father, but He willingly subjects and submits Himself. That passage says it's the same way with a woman who is equal and not inferior to man in her nature or worth, no less in the image of God, but who willingly submits herself to male leadership in the home and church. In fact the intimate marriage relationship is to reflect the intimate Trinity relationship.

In Genesis 1:26 when God says "Let *us* make man in *our* image" we have the first hint of the Trinity – God is speaking within the relationship of the divine persons (He's not talking to the angels as "us" because angels do not create, and mankind is said to be in the image of God in v. 27, not the image of angels and God).

Now notice the key word in the key OT verse on marriage here:

Genesis 2:24 (NASB95) ²⁴For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become **one** flesh.

There's another key word in the OT that every faithful Jew would know along with Genesis 2:24 (also key text on the family).

Deuteronomy 6:4-9 (NASB95) ⁴"Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is **one!** [**unity but can include more than 1 person like in Gen. 2:24**] ⁵"You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. ⁶"These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. ⁷"You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up. ⁸"You shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontals on your forehead. ⁹"You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

This was their life and was to be repeated and recited and reminded daily. Every young Jewish boy would learn this passage by heart and certainly Genesis 2:24 was familiar as well, and those 2 passages show that God's very nature is revealed to Israel as being ONE just as man and woman are one in marriage (united personhood, which Scripture later reveals as 3 persons, one God).

So this first point is that God's purposes for marriage involve reflecting God's image in relationship. Marriage is a picture of God's very nature.

There was even a hint of the Trinity at the beginning of Gen. 1:

Elohim (plural noun) created (singular verb) heavens and earth
v. 2b "... and *the Spirit of God* ..." Later Scripture also informs us that not only God's Spirit was involved, but God's Son was as well

The relational language of Genesis 1:26 (“us ... our”) between the divine persons is a good place to start in understanding God’s image. It involves relational beings, personhood (unlike animals).

God reveals Himself in this text as a relational God, a personal God who has always been in an eternal relationship and communion and fellowship with the other persons that make up the Godhead – what Christians later came to call the Trinity.

John MacArthur writes: ‘But above all, the image of God can be summed up by the word *personhood*. We are *persons*. Our lives involve relationships. We are capable of fellowship. We are able to love other persons in a Godlike sense. We understand communion. We have an amazing capacity for language. We have conversations. We know what it is to share thoughts, convey and discern attitudes, give and take friendship, perceive a sense of brotherhood, communicate ideas, and participate in experiences with others. Animals cannot do those things in the same sense people can. That is why when God created man He immediately said that it was not good for man to be alone [2:18]. The image of God is personhood, and personhood can function only in the context of relationships. Man’s capacity for intimate personal relationships needed fulfillment. Most important, man was designed to have a personal relationship with God.’¹

Marriage Purpose #2 in text – Reproducing godly offspring

Genesis 1:28 God blessed them; and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth ...

God’s glory and image was not be limited to the first couple, but they were to reproduce godly image-bearers of God who would glorify God until the whole earth is filled with the glory.

Sometimes we sing the song “Speak O Lord” which says I think in it’s last line *Speak oh Lord till your church is built and the earth is filled with your glory*. And God’s original intent for this world will happen some day when the world is filled with godly people, but that won’t happen until Jesus Christ returns and the Lord’s prayer is fulfilled “thy Kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” Heaven’s kingdom must come down to earth before that will take place, but it will take place someday.

In the meanwhile, even though sin has entered the picture, it is still God’s calling to couples to reproduce and raise godly children and families, beginning with the blessing “be fruitful and multiply”

This purpose of marriage was not just for Adam and Eve and was not just stated before man’s fall into sin. Look at Genesis 9 how God uses the same language to Noah’s family after all the ungodly were wiped off the face of the earth.

Genesis 9:1 (NASB95) ¹ And God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth ... ⁷“As for you, be fruitful and multiply; Populate the earth abundantly and multiply in it.”

The world quickly became ungodly again but God reiterates His purpose through His elect nation Israel:

Genesis 35:10-11 (NASB95) ¹⁰ God said to him, “Your name is Jacob; You shall no longer be called Jacob, But Israel shall be your name.” Thus He called him Israel. ¹¹ God also said to him, “I am God Almighty; Be fruitful and multiply; A nation and a company of nations shall come from you, And kings shall come forth from you.

This mandate was not just for men but was for couples in marriage, and the Bible recognizes the very special role a mother in particular plays and how vital her childrearing influence should be. Proverbs also celebrates the godly mother and her role in teaching and bringing up children.

1 Timothy 2:14-15 (NASB95) ¹⁴ And *it was* not Adam *who* was deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression. ¹⁵ But *women* will be preserved through the bearing of children if they continue in faith and love and sanctity with self-restraint.

Your Bible may say “women will be saved through childbearing” –my Study Bible says:

‘Better translated in this context, “will be preserved.” The Gr. word can also mean “to rescue,” “to preserve safe and unharmed,” “to heal,” or “to deliver from.” It appears several times in the NT without reference to spiritual salvation (cf. Matt. 8:25; 9:21,22; 24:22; 27:40,42,49; 2 Tim. 4:18). Paul is not advocating that women are eternally saved from sin through childbearing or that they maintain their salvation by having babies, both of which would be clear contradictions of the NT teaching of salvation by grace alone through faith alone (Rom. 3:19,20) sustained forever (Rom. 8:31–39) [in other words it’s not when a physical baby is born, as Jesus told Nicodemus, we all must be born *again* – spiritually regenerated by God’s Spirit]. Paul is teaching that even though a woman bears the stigma of being the initial instrument who led the race into sin, it is women through childbearing who may be preserved or freed from that stigma by raising a generation of godly children (cf. 5:10). **in childbearing.** Because mothers have a unique bond and intimacy with their children, and spend far more time with them than do fathers, they have far greater influence in their lives and thus a unique responsibility and opportunity for rearing godly children. While a woman may have led the human race into sin, women have the privilege of leading many out of sin to godliness ... **if they continue in faith, love, and holiness, with self-control.** The godly appearance, demeanor, and behavior commanded of believing women in the church (vv. 9–12) is motivated by the promise of deliverance from any inferior status and the joy of raising godly children.’ (*MacArthur Study Bible*)

Timothy had experienced this personally:

2 Tim 3:15 ...**from childhood you have known the sacred writings** which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. [Eunice and Lois, faithful mother and grandmother are a good NT example of believers bringing up a godly child, perhaps even with unsaved dad]

1 Corinthians 7:14 speaks of the sanctifying influence a godly spouse and parent can have even in an unequally yoked scenario or unsaved family-member scenarios

Malachi 2 which makes clear God’s intention for marriages and for godly children. From the beginning of the OT to the end and through the NT, God’s purpose is still the same for marriage to reproduce godly families and godly children who love the LORD their God with all their heart, soul, mind, strength, and who love others like they love themselves.

Malachi 2:13-15 (NASB95) ¹³“This is another thing you do: you cover the altar of the LORD with tears, with weeping and with groaning, because He no longer regards the offering or accepts *it with* favor from your hand. ¹⁴“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. ¹⁵“But not one has done *so* who has a remnant of the Spirit. And what did *that* one *do* while **he was seeking a godly offspring**? Take heed then to your spirit, and let no one deal treacherously against the wife of your youth. ¹⁶“For I hate divorce,” says the LORD, the God of Israel, “and him who covers his garment with wrong,” [or violence – NET footnote God views divorce as an act of violence against the victim.] says the LORD of hosts. “So take heed to your spirit, that you do not deal treacherously.”

Instead of “deal treacherously” some versions have “do not be faithless” (ESV) or “do not break faith” (NIV) or “do not be unfaithful” (NET). Some of the translations have significantly different renderings, but however it reads don’t miss the main point that God takes marriage very seriously and how you treat each other in marriage very seriously. Twice we’re told to watch our spirit / hearts, and of course that’s where marital sin starts.

There’s much that could be studied about this passage in Malachi, but for our study notice for now how verse 15 describes the purpose of God in marriage in regards to marriage and children.

NIV: (v. 15) **Has not the LORD made them one?** In flesh and spirit they are his. And **why one? Because he was seeking godly offspring.** So guard yourself in your spirit, and do not break faith with the wife of your youth.

NKJV: But did He not make *them* one, Having a remnant of the Spirit? And why one? He seeks godly offspring.

ESV: Did he not make them one, with a portion of the Spirit in their union? And **what was the one God seeking? Godly offspring.**

Malachi 2:15-16 is very difficult in the Hebrew (v. 16 is the verse traditionally translated as God’s hatred of divorce, although not divorced people, but good scholars debate the wording and translation). One thing that is clear in all the translations of v. 15 is that marriage has to do with reproducing godly offspring. And many scholars believe the language here is a direct reference to the language of Gen. 2:24, giving a commentary that God made man and woman one for the purpose of godly offspring.

Marriage Purpose #3 – Representing God on earth through Covenant Love

When the Bible says God created man in His own image, one of the dominant understandings of an image in the Ancient Near East was representation. Rulers would put images of themselves over their kingdom or dominion to represent who they were.

The kings themselves commonly saw themselves as visible representative of a deity; they ruled on behalf of the god. Since the text we read seems to link the image of God with the exercise of dominion over all the other creatures of the seas, heavens, and earth, God’s image in Genesis 1 endows humanity with authority to rule the earth as God’s representatives or vice-regents

God’s image and delegated dominion given to mankind is so that we would be stewards of God’s good creation, using its resources wisely for man’s benefit, and governing this world with the same sense of responsibility and care that God has toward His creation.

So in general, God's first purpose statement about making mankind in his own image as male and female incorporates this purpose of representing God. I called this 3rd purpose for marriage "Representing God through Covenant Love." Mankind represents God in general (well or poorly) but marriage in particular is to reflect God through its covenant love, a beautiful biblical theme.

Look again at Malachi 2:14. Before God rebukes divorce and violence and mistreating of one's wife, he reminds the man at the end of v. 14 "though she is your companion and your wife **by covenant.**"

Now turn to Proverbs 2. Let's work our way back to the start of the OT by stopping in the middle, at Proverbs 2. Solomon is seeking to instill wisdom and the fear of the Lord in his son. Why?

Proverbs 2:11-19 (NASB95)

¹¹ Discretion will guard you, Understanding will watch over you, ¹² To deliver you from the way of evil ...

¹⁶ To deliver you from the strange woman, From the **adulteress [married woman who has sex with someone not her husband]** who flatters with her words; ¹⁷ That leaves the **companion** of her youth And forgets the **covenant** of her God; ¹⁸ For her house sinks down to death And her tracks *lead* to the dead; ¹⁹ None who go to her return again, Nor do they reach the paths of life.

Now back to Genesis 2. I hope you noticed that both passages speak of marriage not only in terms of companion but in terms of covenant. From Genesis 2 to Proverbs 2 to Malachi 2 – the beginning, middle, and end of the Hebrew Scriptures is consistent in upholding marriage and its purpose of covenant love.

Genesis 2:23-24 (NASB95) ²³ 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." ²⁴ For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh.

This is also covenant language, this is commitment language.

The language of "bone" and "flesh" together from v. 23 in relationship contexts would become for Israel a covenant formula or a pledge for reciprocal loyalty. For example, some tribes who were not related to King David said to him "we are your bone and flesh" (2 Sam. 5:1), which did not mean they were related biologically, but that they were pledging their loyalty and support to him, like a brother, no matter what, till the death.

The word in v. 24 "cleave" or "cling to" or "be joined to" is even by itself a word used of maintaining a covenant relationship (Deut. 4:4, 10:20, 11:22, 13:4, 30:30). You are setting aside the loyalty you once had for your parents and are replacing it with a covenant loyalty to your spouse as top priority. This cleaving or joining of man and wife was a word for a strong or permanent bond.

The Scriptures also speak of the relationship of husband and wife as a picture of the covenant relationship of the Lord to His people, beginning in OT times with Israel as the betrothed of the Lord, and continuing into the NT with the church as His bride. Man and woman made in the image of God are especially to reflect that in marriage.

Ephesians 5:22-32 (NASB95)

²² Wives, *be subject* to your own husbands, as to the Lord. ²³ **For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church**, He Himself *being* the Savior of the body. ²⁴ But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives *ought to be* to their husbands in everything. ²⁵ Husbands, love your wives, **just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her ...** ³¹ **FOR THIS REASON A MAN SHALL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER AND SHALL BE JOINED TO HIS WIFE, AND THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH.** ³² This mystery is great; but **I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church.**

George Knight summed up this passage well in chapter 8 of the excellent book *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*:

‘Unbeknownst to the people of Moses’ day (it was a “mystery”), marriage was designed by God from the beginning to be a picture or parable of the relationship between Christ and the church. Back when God was planning what marriage would be like, He planned it for this great purpose: it would give a beautiful earthly picture of the relationship that would someday come about between Christ and His church. This was not known to people for many generations, and that is why Paul can call it a “mystery.” But now in the New Testament age Paul reveals this mystery, and it is amazing.

This means that when Paul wanted to tell the Ephesians about marriage, he did not just hunt around for a helpful analogy and suddenly think that “Christ and the church” might be a good teaching illustration. No, it was much more fundamental than that: Paul saw that when God designed the original marriage He already had Christ and the church in mind. This is one of God’s great purposes in marriage: to picture the relationship between Christ and His redeemed people forever!

But if this is so, then the order Paul is speaking of here (submission and love) is not accidental or temporary or culturally determined: it is part of the essence of marriage, part of God’s original plan for a perfect, sinless, harmonious marriage. This is a powerful argument for the fact that Christlike, loving headship and church-like, willing submission are rooted in creation and in God’s eternal purposes, not just in the passing trends of culture.’²

When our Lord is to be reflected visibly, perhaps the best way to reflect His likeness and image on this earth is by godly marriages that glorify God by a relationship that reflects our loving Lord.

The Trinity had been speaking to each other its plans for mankind long before Genesis 1, even a plan for redeeming a bride for the Son.

This is the most beautiful truth marriage is to reflect, that God had always planned a wedding supper for the lamb, which we see consummated towards the end of Revelation. And the amazing truth is that Revelation also says all who are the bride of Christ had their names written in the Book of Life before time began.

If you remember from our Titus study, Titus 1:2 speaks of “eternal life, which God who cannot lie, promised before time began.” Who was there for God to promise to before time began? Not to people who didn’t exist yet. God and God alone was in the beginning, so this is a council within the Trinity, just like Genesis 1:26. Hebrews 13:20 speaks of an “eternal covenant” which included the blood of Jesus, His death and resurrection. The promise of Titus 1:2 is a reference to this covenant of redemption, or eternal plan of salvation, which has been summarized as:

‘In short, the Father had promised the Son a redeemed people for His bride. And the Son had promised to die in order to redeem them. All of this occurred in eternity past, before creation.’³

Ephesians 1:4 says the Father chose us (His elect) in Him before the foundation of the world. His saving and calling was not based on what we would do, according to 2 Timothy 1:9 which says God

saved us and called us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus **before the beginning of time** (NIV)

John 17:1-2 (ESV) ¹ When Jesus had spoken these words, he lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, “Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you, ² since you have given him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to **all whom you have given him**.

All that the Father gives to His son will have eternal life and will be a part of the gift at that wedding supper. None will be lost.

John 6:37 (ESV) ³⁷ All that the **Father gives me** will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out.

John 6:39 (ESV) ³⁹ And this is the will of him who sent me, that **I should lose nothing of all that he has given me**, but raise it up on the last day.

John 6:65 (ESV) ⁶⁵ And he said, “This is why I told you that **no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father**.”

In John 17, we see again and again this group given to the Son by His Father from those He owned and purchased with His own blood, a group Scripture calls the elect, or church, or bride.

*6 “I have manifested Your name to the men **whom You gave Me out of the world; they were Yours and You gave them to Me**, and they have kept Your word ...*

*9 “I ask on their behalf; I do not ask on behalf of the world, but of **those whom You have given Me; for they are Yours**;*

This is a staggering truth that should take your breath away. This perfect relationship in the Trinity, of union and love and unity and oneness and intimacy that has been shared in the Godhead for all eternity is to be pictured in the unending love of married humans created in God’s image and reflecting God’s glory and relationship.

22 “**The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one**; 23 I in them and You in Me, that they may be **perfected in unity**, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and **loved them, even as You have loved Me. [!!!]** 24 “Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory which You have given Me, for **You loved Me before the foundation of the world**. 25 “O righteous Father, although the world has not known You, yet I have known You; and these have known that You sent Me; 26 and I have made Your name known to them, and will make it known, so that **the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them**.”

The greatest love in the universe (God the Father to God the Son) is bestowed upon the church, all true believers in Christ. The oneness, the intimacy, the unity, even the glory that was shared in the Trinity, and God's highest love is put on the church. God had always planned to give a gift to His Son a bride as a wedding gift.

MacArthur concludes: 'All of this means that the church is something so monumental, so vast, so transcendent, that our poor minds can scarcely begin to appreciate its significance in the eternal plan of God. Our salvation as individuals is almost incidental. The real aim of God's plan is not merely to get us to heaven ... the drama of our salvation has an even grander purpose: It is an expression of eternal love within the Trinity. We're only the gift.'⁴

¹MacArthur, J. (2001). *The battle for the beginning : The Bible on creation and the fall of Adam*, 2001, Nashville, Tenn.: Word Publishing Group, p. 163.

² George Knight III, "Husbands and Wives as Analogues of the Church," in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, 1991, Crossway, Wheaton, Ill.: p. 175-6.

³ MacArthur, 162.

⁴ <http://www.sfpulpit.com/2007/07/05/why-i-love-the-church-part-3/>