

The Meaning of Marriage

I Understanding God's View of Marriage (Gen. 2:18, 20-24)

Marriage is God's idea. It is certainly also a human institution and it reflects the character of the particular human culture in which it is embedded. But the concept and roots of human marriage are in God's own action, and therefore what the Bible says about God's design for marriage is crucial. (The Meaning of Marriage, Timothy Keller, p. 13)

A "It is not good for the man to be alone" (v. 18)

B God is relational in Himself – "The Dance of God"

Each of the divine persons centers upon the others. None demands that the others revolve around him. Each voluntarily circles the other two, pouring love, delight, and adoration unto them. Each person of the Trinity loves, adores, defers to, and rejoices in the others. That creates a dynamic, pulsating dance of joy and love. The early leaders of the Greek church had a word for this – *perichoresis*. It means literally to "dance or flow around." (*The Reason for God*, Timothy Keller, p. 215)

C Man must be relational in order to image God (Gen. 1:26-27)

1 We are meant to be in relationship with this God

2 We are also meant to be in relationship with others

D God made a helper for Adam (Gen. 2:18)

"Helper" (Heb. 'ezer) is one who supplies strength in the area that is lacking in "the helped." The term does not imply that the helper is either stronger or weaker than the one helped. "Fit for him" or "matching him" is not the same as "like him": a wife is not her husband's clone but complements him. (ESV Study Bible)

1 The woman was created to be Adam's "helper."

a Every man needs a helper

b This has nothing to do with being weaker or stronger

c This word in the OT is usually associated with military help

d Woman was made to be a "strong helper."

2 The woman is also "fit for him" or "suitable for him" or "complementary"

II Understanding Who We Are (Gen. 1:26-27)

A We are made in the image of God and given dominion

Some scholars, seeing the pattern of male and female, have concluded that humanity expresses God's image in relationship, particularly in well-functioning human community, both in marriage and in wider society. ...This "image" and dignity apply to both "male and female" human beings. (ESV Study Bible)

B We are fallen (Gen. 3:1-7)

1 The fall of humanity was instigated by Satan but was helped along by man

2 The man's lack of taking his role as the leader and head

3 The woman's lack of taking her role in being subject to and dependent upon her husband

C Realizing our need of salvation

1 I am a sinner and my spouse is a sinner. I am a sinner that married a sinner. There is no other kind of person to marry.

2 I will fail and my spouse will also fail. Therefore both need to learn to apologize and forgive.

3 A successful marriage doesn't mean there are no conflicts. A successful marriage is where both husband and wife know how to deal with the conflicts and be reconciled to one another.

4 We are products of our past but we don't have to be prisoners of it. God's purpose is not limited by your past. God specializes in giving people a fresh start. (*The Purpose Driven Life*, Rick Warren, p. 28)

Show "It's not about the nail" <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-4EDhdAHrOg>

III Understanding My Spouse (1 Pet. 3:7)

A Primary role of husband is to understand (v. 7)

- 1 Understand her language
 - a Never ≠ never; Always ≠ always; Everybody ≠ everybody; Nobody ≠ nobody
- 2 Understand her need to be heard/validated and not “fixed”
- 3 Understand her needs

B Not being harsh (Col. 3:19)

There was a tendency in the Roman world for men to rage bitterly against their wives and mistreat them. Because of their greater strength and louder voices, men in their sinful natures are prone to use harsh words, threats, unkindness, and even physical violence to intimidate their wives. There is no room for even a hint of this in a Christian home; instead, men are called to love their wives as Christ loved the church (Eph. 5:25). (ESV Study Bible)

C Primary role of wife is to respect (v. 2; Eph. 5:33)

- 1 Understand his need to provide
- 2 Understand his need to solve problems
- 3 Understand his need to de-stress by “doing nothing.”

D Realizing your husband’s responsibility for the family before God

IV Understanding Our Role

A Wife’s sacrificial submission

- 1 Illustrated by The Son’s sacrificial submission to the Father (Phil. 2:5-11)

In Philippians 2:5-11, we have one of the earliest hymns to Jesus sung by the church, which celebrates that although Jesus was equal with God he emptied himself of his glory and took on the role of a servant. Jesus shed his divine privileges without becoming any less divine and he took on the most submissive role – that of a servant who dies in his master’s service. In this passage we see taught both the essential equality of the First and Second Persons of the Godhead, and yet the voluntary submission of the Son to the Father to secure our salvation. Let me emphasize that Jesus’ willing acceptance of this role was wholly voluntary, a gift to his Father. ***I [Kathy Keller] discovered here that my submission in marriage was a gift I offered, not a duty coerced from me....I asked myself if it was not an assault on the dignity and divinity (but rather led to the greater glory) of the Second Person of the Godhead to submit himself, and assume the role of a servant, then how could it possibly injure me to be asked to play out the “Jesus role” in my marriage? (The Meaning of Marriage, Timothy Keller, p. 174-175)***

- 2 The “Dance of the Trinity”

1 Cor 11:3 But I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a wife is her husband, and the head of Christ is God.

In 1 Corinthians 11:3, Paul says directly what is implied in Philippians 2 – namely, that the relationship of the Father and the Son is a pattern for the relationship of husband to wife. The Son submits to the Father’s headship with free, voluntary, and joyful eagerness, not out of coercion or inferiority. The Father’s headship is acknowledged in reciprocal delight, respect, and love. There is no inequality of ability or dignity. We are differently gendered to reflect this life within the Trinity. **Male and female are invited to mirror and reflect the “dance” of the Trinity, loving, self-sacrificing authority and loving, courageous submission. The Son takes a subordinate role, and in that movement he shows not his weakness but his greatness. This is one of the reasons why Paul can say**

that the marriage “mystery” gives us insight into the very heart of God in the work of our salvation (Eph. 5:32). (*The Meaning of Marriage*, Keller, p. 176)

3 Submitting **as is fitting in the Lord** (Col. 3:18)

Instead of telling wives to “obey”, as was typical in Roman households, Paul appeals to them to “submit”, based on his conviction that men have a God-given leadership role in the family. The term suggests an ordering of society in which wives should align themselves with and respect the leadership of their husband (see Eph. 5:22-33). Paul is not enjoining the wives to follow the prevailing cultural patterns of the day but to live as is fitting in the Lord. Seven times in these nine verses (Col. 3:18-4:1) Paul roots his instructions in “the Lord” or an equivalent term, thus stressing the importance of evaluating everything in light of Christ and his teaching. (ESV Bible)

B Husband’s self-sacrificing leadership – 1 Cor. 11:3; Eph. 5:23,25

- 1 Illustrated by Jesus being the Lord and Master of the disciples yet serving them and washing their feet (John 13:12-16)

John 13:13 You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am. 14 If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. 15 For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you. 16 Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him.

Jesus demonstrated in the most dramatic way that authority and leadership mean that you become the servant, you die to self in order to love and serve the Other. Jesus redefined all authority as servant authority. Any exercise of power can only be done in service to the Other, not to please oneself. ...Those tasked with leadership must be the slaves of all, following their master, who “did not come to be served but to serve (Matt. 20:28)...” (*The Meaning of Marriage*, Keller, p. 177-178)

C Learning to be a proper “head”.

- 1 It does not mean the man is more valuable than the woman
- 2 It does not mean that the man is to be a dictator, making independent decisions and telling his wife what to do.

D Loving with self-sacrificing love – Eph. 5:25

This means we must say to ourselves something like this: “Well, when Jesus looked down from the cross, he didn’t think, ‘I am giving myself to you because you are so attractive to me.’ No, he was in agony, and he looked down at us – denying him, abandoning him, and betraying him – and in the greatest act of love in history, he stayed...**He loved us, not because we were lovely to him, but to make us lovely. That is why I am going to love my spouse.” Speak to your heart like that, and then fulfill the promises you made on your wedding day.** (*Meaning of Marriage* , Keller, p. 109)

Husbands are to love their wives in a self-sacrificial manner, following the example of Christ, who “gave himself up for” the church in loving self-sacrifice. **Clearly the biblical picture of a husband laying down his life for his wife is directly opposed to any kind of male tyranny or oppression. The husband is bound by love to ensure that his wife finds their marriage a source of rich fulfillment and joyful service to the Lord.** (ESV Study Bible)