

Marriage & Family Series
What God Has Joined; A Biblical View of Marriage (Part 1)
March 13, 2005
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Well, it's my joy to come this morning to the series that I've been telling you we would begin together, and that is the discussion of marriage and family. For those of you who are single, and have no prospects of being married, I trust you'll listen and learn; and I will eventually get to your situation and circumstance as well.

I was telling the elders this morning in our elders' prayer time that there is nothing more foundational than the truth that we're considering in the weeks to come because marriage lies at the heart of civilization. The very first institution that God created was the institution of marriage. It's also key to our own spiritual lives as we'll see in a few moments. It is absolutely foundational to the church. Our church will only be as healthy as the marriages and families that make it up. And so, nothing could be more crucial for us to examine together than these great truths.

Yesterday my family and I had the opportunity to go with our guests who are visiting with us to the Gaylord Texan. You know it's on Tour Plan A. We stand halfway between the East and West coasts, and we have friends in both, and so we have a number of friends who come to visit us, and we enjoy that. And we have several things that we like to do with them, and go to some of the area attractions. One of those is sometimes the Gaylord Texan, that huge monstrosity of a hotel, that, it's an amazing thing just to think of the maintenance and the organization that's required to keep it functioning.

But as we were there, we saw what is a rare sight in today's world, and that was a genuine potter. My children, some of them, have never seen that before. And so, we went over to watch a little more closely as this potter threw the clay down on the wheel, and it turned, and he gently took his hands and shaped that clay into the image that he had in his own mind. As I watched that potter I was reminded of the serious warning that Paul gives in Romans 12. I'd like for you to turn there as we begin this morning.

Romans 12. Of course, you're familiar, the first verse begins as he concludes that great study of salvation with this sweeping urging of the people of God. Verse 1,

Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, *which is* your spiritual service of worship. [And then he adds what really is sort of a shocking statement. He says,] And do not be conformed to this world.

Now the word "world" here is not the common New Testament word for world. You're familiar with that Greek word, the word "cosmos". That's not the word here. Instead, this is a word that, literally translated, means "age". I could paraphrase it this way; there is with every age, with every period of time, and with every culture, a certain set of values; a mindset if you will; a collection of values that make up the mindset of that age. Paul is saying here, don't be conformed to the mindset of the age in which you live. Our age absolutely has a mindset, a collective set of values that determine what people ought to think and what they ought to believe. Paul says, "don't be 'conformed'." That's an interesting Greek word. It literally means "to push into a mold, to put in a mold". Paul is saying, don't allow your mind, your thinking, to be pushed into the mold of the mindset of your age. What a sober warning.

I believe we live in a day when too many Christians have allowed their thinking to be shaped by the constant, in some cases, gentle, pressure of the mindset of the age in which we live. In other times, it's a violent pressure to conform us to what the culture around us thinks. And nowhere is this pressure to conform our thinking to that of the age in which we live more true than in the area of marriage and family. From every side we feel the pressure to reshape our views to fit that of the culture. But Paul says we must absolutely resist this pressure, and instead, we must be renewed in our thinking by the eternal, timeless (uninfluenced by the passing values of the age) Word of God.

As we begin our series on marriage and family, let me just warn you, that as we come to passages in the Word of God, there are going to be things that Paul says, that Moses says, that are radical. They're not what I'm saying. Don't shoot the messenger. They're what Paul says. They're what God is saying. What I urge you to do is to step back, and, over the next several weeks, make a genuine effort to set aside your own personal views of marriage and family, to listen carefully, to check everything I say against the Scripture; and wherever you discover that your own views contradict the Scripture; wherever you discover that your mind has been gently shaped by the culture around you; determine to trust the God who made you, the God who

designed marriage, and to change. To change your life, to change your thinking, to change your marriage, to change your family. Be open to the clear teaching of the Word of God. That's all I ask you, as we begin this series together.

I mean, after all, who's better qualified to teach us about marriage? God designed marriage. Marriage was the first human relationship He established. God matched the first couple ever to get married, and in fact, I believe that God the Son, the second person of the trinity, performed the first wedding. Because you get to Genesis 2:25, and Adam and Eve are called man and wife. That means somewhere on the sixth day of creation, Jesus Christ in pre-incarnate form performed the first wedding ceremony. God continues to have a great concern about marriage.

In 1 Peter 3:7 there's a shocking statement, really. It says that to us as husbands and wives, speaking directly to husbands (but the same holds true for wives), if we don't live up to what God requires of us in marriage, that affects our spiritual relationship to Christ Himself. In fact, Peter says if you aren't listening to your spouse, then God's not listening to you. That's the bottom line. God still is seriously concerned about marriage. In fact, Christ in His ministry couldn't have made it more clear.

Turn to Matthew 19. We'll come back to this passage in the future and look at it in more detail, but I want you to see what Christ says here. Some Pharisees came to Jesus in verse 3 asking Him about divorce, but notice His response. In verse 5 he quotes Genesis 2:24, that a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh. Verse 6, they are no longer two but one flesh. So, Christ is affirming what's recorded in Genesis about the foundation of marriage, and then He adds this. The end of verse 6, "Therefore what God has joined together, let no man separate." You know we sort of glibly run over those words in the marriage ceremony, but those are profound words. These are words uttered by Christ Himself. And He says to these unbelieving people asking Him about marriage; God joins people together in marriage. It's shocking isn't it. God takes marriage seriously. In fact, according to Christ, it's only in heaven that there'll be no marriage, and until then, marriage is and will continue to be a part of life, all of the social engineers notwithstanding. In fact, when you turn to Matthew 24, Christ says at the time of the second coming, when He returns, He says they will be what--marrying and giving in marriage. It's going to continue.

So, how can we gain God's perspective about marriage. Well, obviously we come to the Word of God. But if you want to understand marriage, there's no better place to go than back to the first marriage. Back to Genesis 2:18-25. Because within these 8 verses are the Scripture's most

fundamental convictions about the nature and purpose of marriage. Moses here lays out the biblical foundation of marriage. Because what's recorded here is not only the circumstances of the first marriage, but it also lays down the fundamental biblical convictions about every marriage, including your marriage and my marriage. Let me read this to you, and then we'll look at these verses together. We'll begin to look at them together this morning. Verse 18,

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. 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." 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."

Here in these verses we have revealed to us the fundamental biblical convictions about marriage. Convictions that each of us should hold, and each of us should follow in our own relationships. What are these fundamental biblical convictions? Well, we are going to look at the first today and in coming weeks we'll look at the others.

The first is this: marriage has a divine purpose. Marriage has a divine purpose. When God designed marriage; when he performed the first wedding, God had several specific goals in mind. If you're married now, or you ever will be married, you ever hope to be married in the future, God has some very exact purposes in mind. The same purposes He had in mind for the first marriage He has in mind for your marriage as well. You know, this is where so many couples stray from God's original design. They go astray right here at the beginning, because they come into marriage with their own goals and their own purposes, and they completely ignore God's.

And so, what happens is, they either end up with a miserable marriage, wishing they were out, you know the only thing worse than wishing you were married is wishing you weren't, or they

end up crashing and burning and ending up in some divorce statistic somewhere. It's because they've ignored God's purposes for marriage. So, what are God's primary purposes for marriage? Well, we could go throughout the Scripture and discover a number of them, but the primary purposes are here in this passage. And I want us to look at them together.

The first purpose for marriage: God has a purpose. What are these purposes? The first purpose is relationship. Relationship. Notice verse 18. "Then the LORD God said, it is not good for the man to be alone;" Now the Trinity had deliberated about creating man. You remember back in 1:26. "Then God said." Who's God talking to here? He's talking to the other members of the Trinity. "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness." So, God had deliberated, and now God deliberates again.

This doesn't mean, here in verse 18, that this idea is just coming to God. You know, that he's realizing, whoops, you know, there's something that I should have done, and it wasn't in My plan. No, God already knew that He would create woman. But He lets us, through Moses, understand what His plan was, what He was thinking, so that we would understand the mind and purpose of God. We're told about God's thinking. It's interesting because seven times in chapter 1, Moses says, "And God saw that it was good". You read through chapter 1, and after each day of creation you pick up on this amazing reality of God saying it's good, or after a number of the days.

So, it's shocking when we get to chapter 2 to discover that something is not good. Only God knows what is good for us, and He says man's greatest need is relationship. "It is not good for the man to be alone." When it comes to marriage, man's greatest need, and the greatest purpose behind marriage, is relationship. Now why is this relationship so important? Well, remember that we were made in the image of God. Back in chapter 1:26 and 27 that's recorded. In 5:1 that's mentioned as well.

Now, when we get, on Sunday nights, to our study of man, which we will in just a few weeks, we'll look in more detail of what it means to be made in the image of God. But one thing it means for sure is that we were made for relationship. You see, there is a constant fellowship and relationship among the members of the Trinity. To be made in God's image means to be made for relationship. You want just a taste of the nature of the relationship between the members of the Trinity, read John 17. In fact, I don't have time to read the whole chapter to you, but turn there, and let me just share the last few verses with you. John 17, this is on the night of our

Lord's crucifixion. This is His great high priestly prayer to His Father, and just, as I read, notice the relationship between the Son and the Father in this passage. Verse 22. Christ says,

“The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one; just as We are one; 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. 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.

“O righteous Father, although the world has not known You, yet I have known You; and these have known that You sent Me; 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.”

You see, at its heart, to enjoy relationship is to copy the divine model. In marriage this is the great goal. It is a deep intimate abiding relationship with your spouse. We're not talking about living under the same roof. We're not talking about just hanging out together at the hardware store. We're talking about the sharing of two hearts. Now, let's be honest, men; we're often clueless about relationship. I've had husbands and wives sit in my office for counseling, and the wife, through tears, will say something like this. “You know, I just don't know how much longer I can stand this marriage because we don't have a relationship.” And of course, I look over, and I know what's going to happen next. The husband gets this shocked look on his face, and he looks over, and he looks back at me, and he says, “I thought we had a great relationship.”

Now what's happening there? Well, there are a couple of possibilities. One is, the wife may have romanticized ideas about what the nature of the relationship should be. But secondly, and this is a common issue. That husband wouldn't know a relationship if it walked up and kissed him. Many men don't understand relationships, and they don't care. Listen to what Stuart Scott writes in his excellent book *The Exemplary Husband*. “Some husbands have excused themselves from their God-given responsibilities with deceptions.” And he's talking about responsibilities in relationship. With deceptions such as: “It shouldn't take so much effort to be together; or my wife should be thrilled that I'm her faithful provider and protector. Why can't that satisfy her? Or I don't really need relationships because--you know, I'm just not a needy person.”

Men, if that's how you think, you are dangerously close to blaspheming the Trinity, because you're saying that the Persons of the Trinity are weak and needy because they have such a deep abiding relationship. No, the absolute opposite is true. What are the two greatest commands in all the Bible? You remember in Matthew 22 Christ is asked what's the greatest commandment, and He answers, and He says, The greatest command is this:

LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, ... MIND, AND ... SOUL, [AND STRENGTH. And] The second is like [unto] it: ...LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.

In other words, the most important things in life, from God's perspective, are relationships. Our relationship to God and our relationship to others. It's not about the stuff. That's where we tend to live, in the stuff. But not only did Christ tell us that these things were important, but He showed us in how He lived. You know what. I think if we were to look at Christ's to-do list, it would look a whole lot different than ours. We live in a different world than the priorities God has established. Christ's life was all about His Father, and people. Everywhere He went, He was interested in people. And remember, what's our goal as believers? Christlikeness. It doesn't just mean moral purity, although it certainly means that. It also means to imitate Christ. Paul says, "Follow me." Imitate me as what? ... as I imitate Christ. That's what we're supposed to be doing. Let me put it bluntly. Both men and women. You cannot be a Godly Christian without being committed to relationship. And that starts with your spouse.

If you were to ask me, "who's your best friend?" Who is the one with whom you talk about everything? Who is the one who knows what you think and what you feel? I mean, I'm not a feeling sort of guy. I don't feel a lot, but whatever I feel--my fears and my hopes--without the slightest hesitation, I would tell you it's my wife, Sheila. And she would say the same thing. And folks, that's the way it should be in every Christian marriage, because the first purpose God had in mind for marriage was relationship. Now what are the enemies of that kind of relationship in marriage? Well, there are a lot of them, but let me give you what in my mind are the big three.

Number one is: just fleshly thinking and living. Galatians 5, there's a list there of the deeds of the flesh. Listen to a few of them. Enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, and disputes. That describes most of the problems I end up in counseling with married couples. If you live according to your flesh; if you live not in obedience to the Scripture, then you're setting yourself up for a bad marriage. Because the works of the flesh are always opposed to good relationships.

There is a second enemy, and that's pride, pride in all three of its forms. You didn't know pride came in different forms, did you? It actually comes, I believe, in three forms. It comes as self-exalting. Pride can exalt oneself. Pride can be self-centered. It doesn't have to be arrogant and boasting. Pride can just be absolutely self-centered. And pride can also demonstrate itself as self-effacing. It's inside-out pride. A person's still focusing on themselves.

The third form, or the third enemy I should say of relationship in marriage, I believe, is: selfishness or self-focused expectations; looking for what you can get out of the marriage. I don't know how many times I have talked to couples, and this is the issue. Well, this isn't what I wanted. This isn't what I expected. You know, I'm not getting any younger, and you know, I want what I want. That's antithetical to the thinking of God and the Scripture. First Corinthians 7, we won't turn there in the interests of time, verses 33 & 34 says that those who are married should be seeking to please their spouses. Paul says the wife seeks to please her husband, and the husband seeks to please his wife. The husband seeks to please his wife. I just wanted to make sure that's clear. In today's world, you never know.

Now let me ask you. How would you rate the nature of your relationship with your spouse? Let me give you a little test, okay? You think, as I run through these options, you think of which best describes your relationship to your spouse.

- #1. The best of intimate friends.
- #2. Warm acquaintances who share much in common and enjoy being together.
- #3. Casual acquaintances who share common space and common responsibilities, much as roommates or co-workers.
- #4. Competitors, always looking for a weakness in order to gain the advantage.
- #5. Settled enemies living under the same roof.

Listen, I have counseled couples at every stage of that chart. Where would you rank your relationship with your spouse? And let me ask me another question. Where would your spouse rank the nature of your relationship? If either of you were to rank less than #1, then your marriage falls short of the divine design. It's for relationship.

The first divine purpose for marriage is relationship, and the second is: help, help. Look back at Genesis 2:18. "Then the LORD God said, 'It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make him a helper....'" The Hebrew words translated "help or helper" usually refer to divine assistance, God helping man. Only in a couple of places in the Old Testament do they speak of

man helping man, and so it's pretty unusual actually that Moses would use this word to refer to wives helping their husbands. But that is the responsibility. Wives were created to help their husbands. Paul puts it very bluntly. In 1 Corinthians 11:9 he says, "for indeed, man was not created for the woman's sake, but woman for the man's sake".

Again, don't shoot the messenger, alright? This is what it says. Now, ladies, if you're honest, as you hear those passages, you find your blood pressure rising just a little bit. When you hear God describe your role as a helper to your husband, your first tendency is to think that's some sort of a denigrating thing because it's so contrary to the spirit of our age. There are women in this country, there are women in this city, hopefully there are no women in this congregation, who would want to hurt me if they heard me say what those passages say; that their divinely given role is to be a helper to their husbands.

But ladies, to help does not imply that the helper is inferior. In fact, I think Christ forever elevates the role of helper when He says on the night before His crucifixion in John 14:16 to His disciples, I'm going to send you another--what--Helper. He's talking about whom? The Holy Spirit. A helper. But He says another helper. Who's the first helper? It's Jesus Christ Himself. God says in the person of His Son, I am here to help you, and the Spirit is here to help you, and wives, you are called to do the same thing to your husband, to be his helper. Now, in what sense was the woman created to be a helper to her husband? Well, there have been a number of views.

Augustine, back in the early church suggested that the wife was to help primarily in the task of bearing children. Those who support this view point to the command "Be fruitful and multiply". They say, yeah, the help here is help in bearing children. To you ladies who've had children, I think it's a pretty serious distortion to say that you helped in bearing children. The truth is, you do all the work. Another view teaches that the wife is to help in the sense of cultivating and keeping the garden. That Eve was created to help Adam cultivate and keep the garden. You remember in 2:15, he was commanded to do that, and they say that's the help she was created for. Another view sees wives as helping by providing support in the widest possible sense. While there is some truth in each of these approaches, I think this last one is the best, since nowhere does Scripture limit the sphere of the wife's help for her husband.

In fact, when you look at the role of the wife's help in Proverbs 31, it's huge. She's created as his helper. God does give us some clarification of exactly what this help looks like in Titus 2. We'll look at this passage when we come to ladies' responsibilities (the wives' responsibilities in marriage), but notice in Titus 2, Paul says to Titus. I want to make sure (verse 3) that the older

women are living a certain way. Older women, by the way, in biblical terminologies, are those older than 60. Sorry, those of you who are older than 60, but that's sort of the standard in the biblical text. And it says that the older women (verse 4) are to encourage or literally train the young women.

Young women being younger than 60. And here's what the commitment of the young women is to be: "to love their husbands, to love their children, to be sensible, pure, workers at home, kind, being subject to their own husbands. So that the word of God will not be dishonored". That's pretty direct. Pretty clear. Turn back to 1 Timothy 5. Paul makes the same point to Timothy. In verse 14 of 1 Timothy 5 he says, "Therefore, I want younger *widows* to get married, bear children, keep house, *and* give the enemy no occasion for reproach...."

Now, many wives are pursuing their own interests. They've given up this concept of helping their husbands, and they're pursuing their own interests; their own careers. And sadly, many husbands are encouraging their wives in their self-serving interests. Now, whatever you do, don't misunderstand what I'm saying here, or what Paul is saying. Wives, women, are more than capable of pursuing careers. They're more than capable of pursuing other interests. But that is not God's design.

Now, I'm not saying, wives (and I don't think Paul is saying here), that you can never under any circumstances work outside the home. I'm simply saying that when you read these passages, it's clear that God's design is not that you build your own life separate from your husband. A wife's first priority in life is to be a helper to her husband: whether it's taking the brunt of training the children, whether it's handling the family business, keeping the home, or serving alongside your husband in ministry. Ladies, those should be the focus of your life even if you have a job.

Let me speak to you men for a moment. Because it may be, men, that you're sitting here squirming a little bit, because you know that your wife would like nothing better than to fulfill these priorities, than to do these things, but you won't let her. Because you want her income to support your lifestyle. What's the higher priority? Obeying the divine design, or living at a higher standard of living? She should not be outside the home just making money so that you can live at a higher standard of living. She is created by God to be a helper to you.

There's another warning I need to give you that's at the other extreme. Husbands, the fact that God designed marriage for your wife to assist you, to help you, does not mean that she is your personal slave. A number of years ago there was a country music song. I was working in the

shipyards, and working as an electrician, and the guy I was working with loved country music, and he turned the radio on as we were commuting, and there was this song that came on.

Put another log on the fire, cook me up some bacon and some beans, go out to the car and change the tire, darn my socks and sew my old blue jeans. Fetch my shoes and then go fix my supper, and fix me up another pot of tea. Just put another log on the fire, baby, then come and tell me why you're leaving me.

That's not the idea behind her being a helper. Remember, the first purpose of marriage is what? Relationship. And secondly, God designed marriage for help.

The third purpose for marriage found in this foundational passage is: completion, completion. Notice verse 18 again of Genesis 2. "Then the LORD God said, it is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him." The word "suitable" translates a Hebrew compound prepositional phrase. Let me translate it for you literally. God says, I'm going to make a helper, "as in front of him, or, like opposite him". This expression is found only here in the Hebrew Old Testament. It means literally "corresponding to, or exactly corresponding". I think the intention of these words is very similar to the expression male and female back in 1:27. "I made them male and female." Exactly corresponding to each other. Now these words have far-reaching implications. The first obvious implication is that he made them male and female. That is God designed marriage for male and female. Marriage is for Bob and Sally, not Dick and Harry. But there's another obvious conclusion, and that is that God designed marriage for one man and one woman. Polygamy was tolerated in the Old Testament, but it was never the divine intention. Jesus makes this clear in the New Testament.

Mark 10 for example, verse 7, he says the two shall become one flesh. So, they are no longer two, but one flesh. Let me just state the obvious. God didn't create a harem for Adam. But there's more in the Genesis passage. By saying that God made mankind male and female, and then by adding in 2:18 that they complement each other, or exactly correspond, God underscores the intrinsic equality of men and women. It's true that man existed prior to woman. Paul makes that point several places in the New Testament, but guys, don't get too cocky. Remember, men and women were created on the same day. It's also true that we're given specific roles. The man is the head; the wife is the helper. But that doesn't deny the spiritual equality that exists between men and women.

In fact, Paul couldn't make it clearer in Galatians 3:28. He says there is neither Jew nor Greek. There is neither slave nor free man. There is neither male nor female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus. In other words, spiritually, all of those external distinctions are erased. There is absolute intrinsic equality before God. In 1 Peter 3, wives are called fellow heirs of the grace of life. The members of the Trinity exist in intrinsic unity and in equality. However, even within the members of the Trinity, there is submission; the Son to the Father. Marriage reflects the image of God. We are spiritually equal before God, but we have been assigned different roles in the marriage.

Now, back in Genesis 2, God determines in verse 18 that He is going to make a helper suitable--corresponding--to Adam. In verse 19 we see that He delays meeting this need. Notice what it 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". This allows Adam to come to the same conclusion to which God had already come. God brings Adam those animals that were in the closest proximity and the most likely to be candidates for companionship. These included, we're told there in verse 19, birds. In verse 20 cattle are added -- that's domesticated animals, and the beasts of the field. That's probably a reference to small wild animals that live near humans. And Adam examines each of these in hope that he would find a suitable companion--someone corresponding to him.

But verse 20 says his search was fruitless. 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 corresponding to him. You see, to name the animals, Adam had to discern their natures, and express that nature in a name. And in that process he discovered that there weren't any other creatures with his nature. He was in fact alone. And once Adam realized that he was alone, just as God had already realized, he's ready for God to meet that need.

In verses 21 and following, you have God's creation of the woman. This whole account has a kind of poetic flavor. It's a mistake to read it as if it were the account of some clinical operation, you know, on the discovery channel. Instead, what you have here, is the depiction of the relationship between a man and his wife. Notice verse 21.

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.”

Now, while Adam slept, God fashioned the rib into a woman. The word “fashioned”, by the way, is a rare word. It literally means “to build”. God built a woman. Now, there are two questions that arise from this passage. One of them is, how God made the woman. I mean, why did he take part of the man to do it. Well, the answer is very obvious, and that is that God wanted Adam and Eve both to know that she was made of his same substance. Bone of his bones, as he said down in verse 23. God used Adam, used part of Adam, to picture the reality that she is truly his complement. She is part of him. But why a rib?

Well, there’s been much discussion about this. A lot of ink spilled on this topic. Personally, I love the immortal words of Matthew Henry. Listen to them. You’ve probably heard them before. “Woman was not made out of his head to top 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.”

One of God’s purposes for marriage was to provide man with completion. Someone who exactly corresponds to him. Now, folks, the practical implications of this are huge. So many people fail to appreciate the differences between men and women. That’s why a book like *Men Are From Mars, Women Are From Venus* has been so popular. They see these differences, and they want to do something about it. Men find themselves wishing that their wives were more like they are. Guys, if you have ever been tempted to think, “I just wish you were more like I am; less emotional”. Or there are wives who wish their husbands were more sensitive; that their husbands would discover their feminine side.

Listen, men, you don’t need to discover your feminine side. If you’re married, you already have one. She’s called your wife. The differences are there to complement one another. Perfectly corresponding--designed by God to make the complete package. Don’t try to re-engineer your spouse. The differences are meant for you to fit together. God’s purpose for marriage was to provide relationship, to provide help, but also to provide this complement, this completion, this corresponding to one another. Someone who would be able to make up for what I lack.

Do you find yourself wishing your spouse were more like you? Or worse, do you find yourself trying to remanufacture your spouse; to make your husband more feminine; or your wife more masculine? Repent, if you have, because you are rebelling against the divine design. And

instead, thank God for the differences. Thank God for the way you correspond to each other in every sense. Your marriage has a divine purpose, and that purpose is fleshed out in Genesis 2. God designed your marriage for relationship, for help, and for completion. Do those words describe your marriage? Or are you still allowing the world to push your mind into the way it thinks?

William Tyndale wrote these words. He says, “When God buildeth, He casteth all down first. He is no patcher.” God doesn’t want to patch your marriage. God wants to clear the rubble of the false ideas you and I collect about marriage and family, and then He wants to build on the foundation what He designed marriage to be. Will you let Him do that? Will you let the Scripture influence your thinking? Allow the gentle pressure--not of the world, to shape your thinking, but the pressure of the Word of God. If we want Christian marriages, true Christian marriages, we must first destroy all of our human rubble. All of the psychological stuff that we’ve built on the foundation of marriage. And then, we must come to the Scriptures with the one goal of seeing our God glorified in our marriages.

Douglas Wilson puts it this way in his little book *Reforming Marriage*. “If we might paraphrase the words of the catechism, the chief end of marriage is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.” The reason we are miserable in our marriages is because we have idolized them. But the glory of God is more important than our domestic happiness. What are you most concerned about in your marriage? Are you after what you want? Then you’re headed for shipwreck. Commit yourself instead to pursue the glory of God in the relationship you have with your spouse.

Let’s pray together.

Father, thank You for Your Word. We confess to You that it cuts us to the heart. It shows our motives. It reveals our sin. Lord, forgive us for allowing the mindset of the age in which we live to influence our thinking. Help us to look at marriage as You do. Help us to be honest with ourselves. And Father, help us as men and women who are already married to examine our marriages in light of what we’ve learned this morning, and sometime in the next few hours or the next few days to get alone with You and then alone with our spouse, and to make things right where they need to be made right; to seek forgiveness where forgiveness needs to be sought, and to set our lives and our marriages on a course that honors You.

Father, I pray for the person here this morning, who has not begun to experience Your design, because they still live in self and pride and self-will and stubbornness. They have refused to bow

the knee to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Lord, certainly they can never enjoy the design You have for marriage, because they haven't begun to enjoy the design You have for life. Lord, I pray this morning you would bring them to faith and repentance; that they would turn from their sins and embrace Christ as Lord and Savior, and commit themselves to follow whatever You have laid down in Your Word including these very direct prescriptions for marriage. May this be the day.

We pray it in Jesus' name.