

Biblical Marriage

God's design for marriage

God's Original Design

Genesis 2:18-24

[18] And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him. [19] And out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof. [20] And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field; but for Adam there was not found an help meet for him. [21] And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; [22] And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. [23] And Adam 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] Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.

Matthew 19:4-6

[4] And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, [5] And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? [6] Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.

Genesis 1:27-28

[27] So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. [28] And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.

Proverbs 18:22

Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour of the LORD.

Marriage is not a human invention, cultural construct, or social convenience but a divine institution established by God in creation. 'The LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him.' God created woman from man's rib, brought her to Adam, and instituted the first marriage.

Adam's response—'This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh'—expresses the profound unity and complementarity God designed. 'Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.' Jesus affirmed this creation ordinance: 'Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, and said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh?' Marriage predates the fall, civil government, and even the giving of the law—it is woven into the fabric of creation itself.

God created humanity male and female, blessed them, and commanded fruitfulness—establishing the family as creation's basic unit. Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour of the LORD.

Marriage reflects God's design for complementarity, companionship, procreation, and the display of the gospel mystery. Understanding marriage as divine institution protects it from redefinition by culture or government.

What God has joined together, let not man put asunder. Marriage's permanence, exclusivity, and heterosexual design flow from its divine origin and purpose.

One Flesh Union

Genesis 2:24

Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.

1 Corinthians 6:16

What? know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body? for two, saith he, shall be one flesh.

Ephesians 5:31

For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh.

Mark 10:8

And they twain shall be one flesh: so then they are no more twain, but one flesh.

The 'one flesh' union constitutes marriage's essential nature—a mysterious joining that transcends mere contract or cohabitation. When a man cleaves to his wife, they become one flesh—not two individuals cooperating but one new entity in God's sight.

Paul applies this truth both to marriage (Ephesians 5:31) and, negatively, to sexual immorality (1 Corinthians 6:16), demonstrating that sexual union creates a one-flesh bond whether legitimate (marriage) or illegitimate (fornication). This is why fornication and adultery are uniquely sinful—they violate or destroy the one-flesh design.

The one-flesh union encompasses physical, emotional, spiritual, legal, and social dimensions. Physically, sexual union expresses and reinforces this bond.

Emotionally, spouses share life's deepest intimacies, joys, and sorrows. Spiritually, believing couples unite in worship, prayer, and ministry.

Legally, they become one economic and social unit. Socially, they present themselves as one entity.

This comprehensive unity explains why divorce is so devastating—it attempts to sever what God has joined, tearing apart one flesh. The one-flesh union is not achieved gradually through years of marriage but established at the marriage covenant itself, then expressed, deepened, and enjoyed throughout married life.

Understanding this mystery protects against viewing marriage as mere partnership, guards sexual purity (sex belongs exclusively within marriage), and motivates spouses to cultivate unity in every dimension. In marriage, two truly become one—not losing individual identity but forming a new, inseparable union reflecting divine mystery.

Covenant Commitment

Malachi 2:14-16

[14] Yet ye say, Wherefore? Because the LORD hath been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, against whom thou hast dealt treacherously: yet is she thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant. [15] And did not he make one? Yet had he the residue of the spirit. And wherefore one? That he might seek a godly seed. Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth. [16] For the LORD, the God of Israel, saith that he hateth putting away: for one covereth violence with his garment, saith the LORD of hosts: therefore take heed to your spirit, that ye deal not treacherously.

Proverbs 2:17

Which forsaketh the guide of her youth, and forgetteth the covenant of her God.

Matthew 19:6

Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.

Romans 7:2

For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband.

Biblical marriage is a covenant—a solemn, binding promise made before God and witnesses, not a contract easily dissolved when inconvenient. Malachi addresses those who dealt treacherously with the wife of their youth: 'The LORD hath been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, against whom thou hast dealt treacherously: yet is she thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant.' The unfaithful wife of Proverbs 'forgetteth the covenant of her God.' Jesus declared that what God has joined together, let not man put asunder, and Moses' divorce permission was given because of hardness of heart, not because God approves dissolution of marriage.

The wife is bound by the law to her husband as long as he lives. Covenant commitment means unconditional faithfulness—'for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, till death us do part.' This permanence reflects God's faithful covenant with His people, who declares, 'I hate putting away'

(divorce).

Marriage vows are not suggestions or aspirations but binding promises invoking God's name. Contemporary culture's casual approach to marriage—serial relationships, cohabitation, easy divorce—contradicts Scripture's covenant theology.

The biblical standard requires preparation before marriage (counting the cost, ensuring compatibility and spiritual unity), commitment during marriage (working through difficulties rather than abandoning vows), and permanence (recognizing that only death or a partner's adultery potentially releases from the covenant). This high view of marriage as covenant produces stability for children, security for spouses, and witness to God's faithfulness.

Roles and Mutual Submission

Ephesians 5:22-25

[22] Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. [23] For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. [24] Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. [25] Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;

1 Peter 3:1-7

[1] Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives; [2] While they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear. [3] Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; [4] But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price. [5] For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands: [6] Even as Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose daughters ye are, as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement. [7] Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered.

Colossians 3:18-19

[18] Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord. [19] Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them.

Genesis 2:18

And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him.

Scripture establishes complementary roles within marriage, with wives called to submit to husbands and husbands called to love wives sacrificially. 'Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.

For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church.' Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands. Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord.

This submission is not inferiority (men and women are equal in value and dignity before God) but functional order within marriage, mirroring Christ's relationship to the church. The husband's headship, however, is defined by Christ's example: 'Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it.' Husbands must dwell with wives according to knowledge, giving honour unto them as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life.

Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them. Biblical headship is servant leadership—initiating spiritual direction, providing protection and provision, making final decisions prayerfully, and laying down life for wife's good.

The wife's submission is to her own husband, not to men generally, and never requires obeying commands to sin. Woman was created as man's 'help meet'—not inferior assistant but necessary, complementary partner.

Mutual submission (Ephesians 5:21) frames specific role instructions, indicating that both spouses defer to one another in love. This complementarian design, properly understood and applied, produces harmony, security, and flourishing.

It counters both secular egalitarianism (denying all distinctions) and sinful chauvinism (distorting headship into domination).

Love and Respect

Ephesians 5:33

Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband.

Titus 2:4

That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children,

1 Peter 3:7

Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered.

Colossians 3:19

Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them.

Scripture's marital commands center upon love for husbands and respect for wives. 'Let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband.' The older women should teach the young women to love their husbands, to love their children.

Husbands must give honour unto wives, dwelling with them according to knowledge. Husbands must love their wives and be not bitter against them.

These complementary commands address each sex's deepest need and greatest temptation: husbands need respect (their greatest fear is inadequacy and failure); wives need love (their greatest fear is abandonment and neglect). The husband's love must be active, sacrificial, and Christlike—loving as Christ loved the church, giving himself for her.

This love serves, protects, provides, cherishes, and nourishes. It is not primarily emotional feeling but committed action for the wife's good.

The wife's respect honors her husband's position, trusts his leadership, speaks well of him, and supports his decisions. She reverences him—treating him with honor and deference, not contempt or manipulation.

When husbands love sacrificially, wives find submission joyful; when wives respect genuinely, husbands find loving natural. Conversely, disrespect provokes husbands to anger and withdrawal; unloving harshness provokes wives to bitterness and rebellion.

The cycle of love and respect must be maintained regardless of the other's failure—husbands must love even unsubmitive wives; wives must respect even unloving husbands. As both fulfill their callings, marriage flourishes, demonstrating God's design and displaying the gospel's beauty to a watching world.

Sexual Intimacy

1 Corinthians 7:3-5

[3] Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence: and likewise also the wife unto the husband. [4] The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife. [5] Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency.

Hebrews 13:4

Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.

Proverbs 5:18-19

[18] Let thy fountain be blessed: and rejoice with the wife of thy youth. [19] Let her be as the loving hind and pleasant roe; let her breasts satisfy thee at all times; and be thou ravished always with her love.

Song of Solomon 4:1-16

[1] Behold, thou art fair, my love; behold, thou art fair; thou hast doves' eyes within thy locks: thy hair is as a flock of goats, that appear from mount Gilead. [2] Thy teeth are like a flock of sheep that are even shorn, which came up from the washing; whereof every one bear twins, and none is barren among them. [3] Thy lips are like a thread of scarlet, and thy speech is comely: thy temples are like a piece of a pomegranate within thy locks. [4] Thy neck is like the tower of David builded for an armoury, whereon there hang a thousand bucklers, all shields of

mighty men. [5] Thy two breasts are like two young roes that are twins, which feed among the lilies. [6] Until the day break, and the shadows flee away, I will get me to the mountain of myrrh, and to the hill of frankincense. [7] Thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee. [8] Come with me from Lebanon, my spouse, with me from Lebanon: look from the top of Amana, from the top of Shenir and Hermon, from the lions' dens, from the mountains of the leopards. [9] Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse; thou hast ravished my heart with one of thine eyes, with one chain of thy neck. [10] How fair is thy love, my sister, my spouse! how much better is thy love than wine! and the smell of thine ointments than all spices! [11] Thy lips, O my spouse, drop as the honeycomb: honey and milk are under thy tongue; and the smell of thy garments is like the smell of Lebanon. [12] A garden inclosed is my sister, my spouse; a spring shut up, a fountain sealed. [13] Thy plants are an orchard of pomegranates, with pleasant fruits; camphire, with spikenard, [14] Spikenard and saffron; calamus and cinnamon, with all trees of frankincense; myrrh and aloes, with all the chief spices: [15] A fountain of gardens, a well of living waters, and streams from Lebanon. [16] Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out. Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits.

God designed sexual intimacy as a holy gift for marriage, providing pleasure, unity, procreation, and protection from temptation. 'Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence: and likewise also the wife unto the husband.

The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife. Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency.' Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.

Let thy fountain be blessed: and rejoice with the wife of thy youth. Let her breasts satisfy thee at all times; and be thou ravished always with her love.

The Song of Solomon celebrates marital love in explicitly sensual terms, demonstrating that God approves sexual pleasure within marriage. These passages establish several principles: First, sexual intimacy is good, holy, and commanded

within marriage—not a necessary evil but a divine gift.

Second, both spouses have conjugal rights and responsibilities—sex is mutual, not one-sided. Third, except for brief periods of mutual consent for prayer, spouses should not deprive one another sexually.

Fourth, regular sexual intimacy protects against temptation to immorality. Fifth, sex belongs exclusively within heterosexual marriage—all other sexual expression (fornication, adultery, homosexuality) is sin.

Healthy marital intimacy requires communication, selflessness, patience, and prioritization. Many Christian marriages suffer from neglecting this gift through false spirituality, busyness, or selfishness.

Biblical sexuality rejects both prudish denial (sex is shameful) and pornographic distortion (sex is merely physical recreation).

Spiritual Partnership

1 Peter 3:7

Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered.

1 Corinthians 7:14

For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy.

Joshua 24:15

And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.

Ecclesiastes 4:9-12

[9] Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour.

[10] For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up. [11] Again, if two lie

together, then they have heat: but how can one be warm alone? [12] And if one prevail against him, two shall withstand him; and a threefold cord is not quickly broken.

Christian marriage at its best is spiritual partnership—two believers united in worship, prayer, ministry, and mission. Husbands must dwell with wives according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers be not hindered.

The unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband (referring to covenant privilege, not salvation)—yet this acknowledges marriage's spiritual dimension. Joshua declared, 'As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD,' establishing spiritual leadership within the family.

Two are better than one, for if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow; and a threefold cord is not quickly broken—the marriage with God at its center possesses strength beyond mere human partnership. Spiritual partnership means praying together, studying Scripture together, worshipping together, serving together, raising children in the Lord together, and pursuing Christ together.

The husband's spiritual leadership involves initiating family worship, teaching God's Word, modeling godliness, and directing the household toward Christ. The wife's spiritual partnership involves supporting, encouraging, teaching children, creating a godly home atmosphere, and exercising her own gifts.

When both spouses pursue Christ, they naturally draw closer to one another. When both submit to Scripture, conflicts find resolution.

When both depend on the Spirit, love and patience flourish. Marriage between believers enjoys resources unavailable to unbelievers—God's Word for guidance, the Spirit's power for transformation, prayer for divine intervention, and the church for support.

This spiritual dimension elevates marriage from natural institution to redemptive metaphor and ministry partnership.

Marriage as Gospel Picture

Ephesians 5:25-32

[25] Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; [26] That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, [27] That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. [28] So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. [29] For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church: [30] For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. [31] For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. [32] This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.

Revelation 19:7-9

[7] Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. [8] And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. [9] And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God.

2 Corinthians 11:2

For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.

Isaiah 54:5

For thy Maker is thine husband; the LORD of hosts is his name; and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel; The God of the whole earth shall he be called.

The ultimate purpose of marriage transcends personal happiness or social stability—marriage exists to display the gospel and Christ's relationship to His church. 'Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish...

This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.' Marriage

from creation foreshadowed Christ's union with His bride. The marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready—the church clothed in fine linen, clean and white.

Paul was jealous over the Corinthians with godly jealousy, having espoused them to one husband, to present them as a chaste virgin to Christ. 'Thy Maker is thine husband; the LORD of hosts is his name,' declares Isaiah.

When husbands love sacrificially, they image Christ's love. When wives submit joyfully, they image the church's response.

When marriages demonstrate covenant faithfulness, they testify to God's faithfulness. When sexual purity is maintained, it pictures the church's devotion to Christ alone.

When love perseveres through difficulty, it reveals redeeming grace. This gospel purpose elevates marriage beyond self-fulfillment to sacred calling.

It provides motivation in difficulty—your marriage testifies to Christ. It offers perspective in conflict—is your marriage displaying the gospel?

It gives meaning to sacrifice—laying down your life for your spouse images Christ's atonement. Christian marriage is earthly picture of heavenly reality, temporary shadow of eternal substance, visible demonstration of invisible grace.

May our marriages magnify Christ and adorn the gospel.

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