

Genesis 2:18-25

Genesis 2¹⁸ Then the Lord God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him.” ¹⁹ 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. ²⁰ 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. 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. ²² The Lord God fashioned into a woman the rib which He had taken from the man, and brought her to the man. 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. ²⁵ And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.

Richard Phillips on Genesis 2...

All through Genesis 2, we witness God’s wonderful provision for mankind. The Lord planted a garden in Eden, granting Adam authority and a calling to satisfying work. There were wondrous animals, flowing streams of clear water, fruit-bearing trees, and valuable ores. ***At the conclusion of this chapter, we witness God’s providing something especially wonderful... a companion designed to be suitable to the man’s needs. The importance of this final gift is highlighted by a most remarkable statement from the Lord.***

All through the creation account, we read of God’s satisfaction in the goodness of all that he had made. Everything was good! Yet now, for the first time, we encounter a divine malediction. The grammatical form (Hebrew, *lo tob*) is ***emphatic: there was something not good at all. So far as we are told, Adam was not aware of the deficiency.***

But God was determined to intervene: “Then the LORD God said, ‘It is not good that the man should be alone’ ” (Gen. 2:18).

The effect of this pronouncement is to highlight just how important it was for man to have his designed companion. John Calvin comments that Genesis 2 places a value on marriage so that we may better know that it was a singular gift of God... God showed he was abundantly generous when he joined the human race together in such a beautiful covenant...***with man having an individual helpmate and the woman also having the companionship of her husband.***

The Divine Institution of Marriage

In describing the provision of marriage, Genesis 2 highlights it as an institution created and governed by God... The fact that God made the first woman for the institution of marriage tells us that he defines it as existing between only one man and one woman.

In order to fulfill the Creator’s design, we need to understand the purposes that God intended for marriage.

First and primary is God’s provision of holy companionship for men and women. This emphasis is seen in God’s statement, “It is not good that the man should be alone” (Gen. 2:18). God’s remedy for man’s solitude is the true companion that is a wife. God designed mankind to enjoy fellowship not only upward toward God but also close at hand with an equal partner. It is certainly possible for single Christians to find support in friendships that do not involve marriage. But in the majority of cases, people long for the special union that God has designed in marriage. Proverbs 18:22 expresses the biblical outlook: “He who finds a wife finds a good thing and obtains favor from the LORD.”

A second important purpose for marriage is the procreation of children. We have already seen God’s mandate to Adam and Eve to “be fruitful and multiply” (Gen. 1:28). God desires a vast number of image-bearing people to worship and serve him, and he provided marriage as the means to provide these children. Marriage does not require children—those couples who are unable to have children are no less married than those with children—yet the Bible’s high value on children is without question. Psalm 128:3 says, “Your wife will be like a fruitful vine within your house; your children will be like olive shoots around your table.” The prophet Malachi asked, “What was the one God seeking” in marriage? He answered, “Godly offspring” (Mal. 2:15). ***This fruitful motive is given as one of the primary reasons for husbands to honor and protect their marriages.***

A third biblical purpose for marriage is as God's designed context for sexual pleasure. Song of Songs takes a wholly positive approach to marital intimacy: "How beautiful is your love, my sister, my bride! How much better is your love than wine" (Song 4:10).

Given these most valuable contributions—close companionship, children, and marital intimacy—we can see why the Bible calls for Christians to hold marriage in the highest esteem. Hebrews 13:4 states, "Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled." The calling to honor marriage extends not only to married couples but also to Christians who are not married. Both the church and the society utterly depend on the quality of their marriages, so everyone has an interest in promoting and protecting this institution...***Marriage is the first of all human institutions established by God.***

To make clear to Adam the value of this provision, the Lord brought samples of the other kinds of creatures for his inspection: "Now out of the ground the LORD God had formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name" (Gen. 2:19).

What a remarkable scene! Man stood by as the Creator brought representative "kinds" (Gen. 1:21) of animals present in the garden. Adam's lordship over the living creatures is highlighted as he names the animals. We can scarcely imagine the keen intellect and piercing insight with which the original unfallen man engaged in this fascinating exercise, viewing and briefly studying the animals so as to discern each creature's nature and grant its name. ***Yet the purpose of this naming was not primarily scientific... God's aim was for the man to appreciate the unique value of the woman whom he was about to provide.*** Genesis 2:20 concludes: "The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him."

Man's true companion was designed to come alongside him in every way, as a fellow bearer of God's image and a true helper in the work given by God.

An ancient rabbinical source has Adam lamenting as the animals pass by, saying, "Everything has its partner but I have no partner." We may suppose that Adam began his zoological study with a great deal of excitement and interest. Yet he surely concluded with a sense of the lack that God had already observed, perhaps waiting with a powerful longing to see what the Lord would do to satisfy his need.

“It was obvious to Adam that the animals came in pairs and he had no mate. Since God deliberately had Adam name the animals after seeing his need for a partner (Genesis 2:18), God used this to prepare Adam to receive the gift of woman.”

David Guzik (from EnduringWord.com)

Here Comes the Bride!

When we turn to the creation of the first woman, we approach a subject that has no parallel in the creation myths of other ancient peoples. The Egyptian, Babylonian, and Canaanite legends take no notice of women, who are simply subsumed under the heading of man. ***In contrast, the Bible consistently elevates the status and dignity of women as full bearers of the image of God.***

We previously noted how Genesis establishes a mandate for the masculine gender. Adam was given lordship under God over the earth, as seen in his right to name the animals. He was further placed in the garden “to work it and keep it” (Gen. 2:15). ***The man was to take responsibility for the well-being and security of his realm.***

Genesis 2:18 plays a similarly structural role for women, especially in the marriage relationship. Since it was “not good that the man should be alone,” ***God made her to be “a helper fit for him.” She is designed by God to meet the man’s need for companionship and to provide help in his earthly work.*** R. Kent Hughes writes: “The woman would make it possible for man to do what he could never do alone. . . . Something ‘very good’ would fill man’s aloneness.”

In Scripture, “helper” is a term denoting strength and ability. This is why the term usually refers in the Bible to God himself. This same word (Hebrew, *ezer*) is found in the eloquent opening lines of Psalm 121: “I lift up my eyes to the hills. From where does my help come? My help comes from the LORD, who made heaven and earth” (see also Ex. 18:4; Deut. 33:7; 1 Sam. 7:12). ***It is precisely because of the distinctive strengths of the woman that she can imitate God as a mighty helper.***

Given their calling from God, women should delight in providing holy companionship to men, especially within marriage...She is the “indispensable partner,” who faces life’s challenges and joys at his side and together in his cause...Her enabling contributions touch every aspect of the man’s life and provide a support to him in every trial.

Moreover, the woman serving as a helper does not imply a one-way trajectory of ministry. Adam was called to “work . . . and keep” (Gen. 2:15), that is, to build up and protect. Marriage thus provides the primary context, together with fatherhood, in which a man comes into his own as the servant leader that God designed him to be. ***God’s intent for men in marriage is not merely that they be loved by their wives, but that they learn to love in corresponding service.***

The woman was designed to be not just any kind of helper, “but “a helper fit for him” (Gen. 2:18). The Hebrew *kenegdo* means she is his matching counterpart, ***like a puzzle piece shaped to fit. The woman is not identical to the man but instead is complementary.*** It is in this sense that she is “a helper suitable for him” (NIV) or “an help meet for him” (KJV). She and the help she gives are designed by God to fit exactly what Adam needs.

“Man, created in God’s image, should be in relationship with God and his fellow human beings. help meet for him. A capable and needed assistant well suited for man, created in God’s image (1:27) to support man in his calling to fill and subdue the earth in obedience to God’s law (1:28; 2:15–17).” Michael Barrett

David Guzik on woman as man’s suitable/comparable/“just right” companion...

God’s “blueprint” for creating this companion to Adam was to make a **helper comparable** to Adam. Different versions of the Bible translate this idea in a variety of ways, but the idea is essentially the same in each of them...

- **“I will make him a helper suitable for him.”** (NASB)
- I will make a helper who is ***just right for him.*** (NLT)
- I do make to him an helper -- ***as his counterpart.*** (Young’s Literal Translation)
- ***Helper meet (suitable, adapted, completing)*** (Amplified).
- ***A helper correspondent to himself*** (Septuagint Bible).
- ***A helper suitable*** (NIV, NASB).
- ***A help meet for him*** (KJV)...”*a helpmate*”

From EnduringWord.com

If we are left wondering exactly how God’s marriage was designed to work, we have a potent illustration in the making of the woman...

So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. (Gen. 2:21–22)

The word for “rib” is usually translated more generally to refer to the “side” of a man. The point is that God took the flesh and bone from Adam in order to make his suitable helper from his own substance.

Two evident points are offered by the making of the woman. The first is her compatibility with the man. Since she is made for the man, she is also made from the man...In marriage, a man discovers the “missing part” of himself, a wife whose very makeup is designed to complement and help him.

A second idea highlighted as Adam’s “rib” is fashioned into a wife is the companionship that God intends.

Matthew Henry perfectly describes the partnership that God intended. She was “not made out of his head to rule over him, nor out of his feet to be trampled upon by him, but out of his side to be equal with him, under his arm to be protected, and near to his heart to be beloved.”

Calvin writes that “he lost, therefore, one of his ribs; but, instead of it, a far richer reward was granted him, since he obtained a faithful associate of life; for he now saw himself, who had before been imperfect, rendered complete in his wife.”

Regarding Marriage

As we reflect on this important moment in human history, there are vital implications for Christians.

The first is that we must note again that gender identity is created by God and not by one’s experience or preference, as is so foolishly claimed by our culture today. There is a God-designed difference between male and female, and their respective creation accounts make this clear.

In Genesis 2:7, the first man was created from the dust of the earth. Now, the woman is made not from the earth but from the man. She is taken from Adam's biological material, and then God further constructs her as a more intricate and subtle member of the human race...***God fashioned the woman from the man in such a way that she is different as well as the same.***

This feminine design means that a woman possesses distinctive features from those of a man...In this respect, it is noteworthy that a different verb is used in her creation compared to the making of man. Here, the verb is *banah*, which has the idea of "building up" or "fashioning." Later, this word is used for the ornate decorating of Israel's temple (Isa. 44:28; Zech. 8:9).

This is the climax of ch. 2. The mode of creation of woman is vital in understanding the nature of woman: God made woman after man as under his authority (1 Tim. 2:11–13), and from man to share his nature yet not to be independent from him but to be for him (1 Cor. 11:7–9). The word made (not the same as 1:26–27; 2:7) means "built" and is often used of architecture, implying that woman is intricately crafted and balanced to complement man. Michael Barrett

So God took male material and fashioned it to make a woman of beauty and complexity for the sake of man, as well as for his own pleasure and glory.

Christians should respond to the Bible's clear teaching on gender by embracing the biblical qualities associated with their sex.

Men should not seek to be physically beautiful or emotionally delicate. They are designed for strength of character and body in order to be workers and protectors in God's garden. Women, likewise, are to cultivate feminine beauty, not only in their outward form but in their inward character. While each woman is an individual who will be somewhat different from all others, there is a graciousness that befits the suitable helper that God designed her to be. Peter notes that Christian women are designed to cultivate "the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God's sight is very precious" (1 Peter 3:4). ***The difference between men and women should be obvious in the family and the church, and these differences should be cultivated rather than suppressed.***

A second application of the Bible's teaching is that marriage is by its very design a challenge that requires effort and care. The word kenegdo, which describes the woman as man's suitable counterpart, also notes that women are simply different from men... This explains why men and women do not think the same way, process information in the same manner, find the same things interesting, and go about things with the same approach.

As one commentator has put it...As long as a man and woman live together in marriage, therefore, they will remain something of a mystery to each other.

Even before sin entered the marriage, the relationship demanded effort. The apparent intention is that men and women would learn to practice an intentional love toward one another. In marriage, God intends for his image-bearers to learn to love, and to this end he has made us different even as we fit together.

Third, the details of God's creation of the woman and the institution of marriage reveal order and authority. Paul notes God's design for male leadership in that "Adam was formed first, then Eve" (1 Tim. 2:13). Reflecting on the roles given by God in the forming of woman from the man, Paul states that "the head of a wife is her husband" (1 Cor. 11:3).

The order of creation therefore reflects an intended authority structure. As one commentator has put it... "the man has a leadership role while the woman has a 'followship' position."

Adam's lordship is highlighted when he names the woman in Genesis 2:23. His headship over the woman is different from his rule over the lower animals: she is his helper/ companion, not his mere subordinate. So while the text shows order and authority, the context also defines them as "partners who together exercise rule, fulfilling the mandate of [Genesis] 1:28.

Fourth, we hardly do justice to this account unless we note the sheer delight that God intends for the marriage relationship and the love with which the man is to receive his wife from God's hands.

In Genesis 2:22, we can hear the music playing "Here comes the bride!" in the first wedding: "The LORD God . . . brought her to the man." Adam's reaction has been mirrored in the face of countless grooms as their beloved brides walk down the aisle.

Then the man said, ‘This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man’ ” (Gen. 2:23).

These are the first recorded human words in the Bible! Simultaneously, this is the first poem on record—a love poem composed spontaneously by the ecstatic heart of the first man at the sight of the first woman, his bride! She is just right for him, Adam exclaims! She is “bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh,” recognizing a oneness of essence with her. Adam then gives her a name that reflects her origin and kinship to him...“she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man” (v. 23). In Hebrew, the word for “male” is ish, and Adam calls the woman ishshah. Her very name indicates that she is like him and from him! God made her for him and from him and brought her to him!

In a passage that began with the first “not good” in the Bible, how wonderfully good it was of the Creator to make a helper who would evoke such excitement and delight from man’s heart.

It was with the ecstasy of love that Adam realized that he was no longer alone. God had made a fitting companion for his heart and body!

Source...Richard Phillips, Genesis

Kent Hughes on Marriage Ordained (Genesis 2:24, 25)...

“Here in the text Adam’s voice subsides, and the voice of Moses concludes...

“Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh” (v. 24).

Moses’ words were divine revelation, and Jesus himself would quote them as the very Word of God (cf. Matthew 19:5). These words, this Word of God, became the deep well for the Bible’s teaching on marriage and family.

Leave. Neither before Moses nor after Moses was it ever the custom for a man to leave his father and mother when he took a wife. It just was not done. In fact, the custom was for a man to marry and remain in his father’s household, as did Jacob’s sons who remained with him though they founded their own families and fortunes.

Rather, custom called for the wife to join the family of her husband. So Moses' declaration, "Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother" must be understood relatively and as a prescription for the loyalty and intimacy that a man must give his wife—he must "leave" his family. The union with his wife is so profound that he leaves his family even though he remains with them. His first obligation and loyalties are to his wife.

So many marriages fail today at precisely this point: Husbands and wives fail to leave their parents. First loyalties are not established. The creation norm is ignored—and marriage perverted.

Cleave. The following requirement, "and hold fast to his wife" has been made much too tame in our translation. ***The exact sense is, "and sticks to his wife," even as Israel was repeatedly urged to stick to the Lord in covenantal relationship (cf. Deuteronomy 10:20; 11:22; 13:4).***

The term "leave" ("stick") here indicates that marriage is to be viewed as a covenant. Leaving and cleaving involves a public declaration in the sight of God. Marriage is not a private matter. It involves a declaration of intention and a reorganizing of relationship. The idea of a purely private marriage is a recent aberration spawned by the culture of individualism and the demise of community. Christian marriage calls for a public covenant before God, the church, the family, and the state.

It is of utmost importance that we understand and hold before us that what is taught about man and woman and marriage here was given at and rooted in the very act of creation. The creation of Eve and the command to leave and cleave occurred on the sixth day as the culmination of the creation process. ***This is radically primary to creation and civilization.***

Jesus himself called on this passage to establish the fact that marriage is an ordinance of God...

"Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh'? So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate." (Matthew 19:4-6)

One flesh. Likewise Paul declared this as foundational to marriage...

‘Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.’ This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church” (Ephesians 5:31, 32).

Human marriage illustrates something of the union between Christ and his people. “One flesh” expresses deepest intimacy. Everything is shared. And this is so between Christ and the church. That is why a marriage that rises to the creational intention is so important. ***It is a human window into how Christ and his bride relate. This makes the quality of our marriages of great importance.***

Now the obvious thing must be stated: Monogamous heterosexual marriage was always viewed as the norm from the time of creation.

How lovely it all is with God at the center of marriage and his instruction the rule and guide. Adam and Eve were truly in paradise. Fellowship with God was as natural as breathing. They lived in one-flesh harmony.

At the end of the sixth day Yahweh-Elohim’s “not good” became “very good”. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day” (1:31).

When God’s word informs your life and love—when God is your center—it is very good.

Source...Kent Hughes, Genesis