

Christian Marriage

God's plan for marriage is between a man and a woman

'Then the LORD God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it. The LORD God commanded the man, saying, "From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die." 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 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. 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. 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." Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.'

Gen 2:15-25

God made Adam the head of his family

While not leaving father and mother and being joined to his wife will bring its own problems, it's not so much about the location they live in, for in today's world this depends largely on culture; it's all about a change in where their personal loyalty is now re-located.

The husband and wife are now united as one flesh; they are one inseparable unity in life, a

family unit made for God's purpose and for the glory of God who created them.

The man and the woman's first responsibilities and loyalty is now to each other under God, they now answer at a personal level to one another as they obey God. Before Eve was made, Adam, having the authority of God, had already named all the animals and was given directions by God as to the limitations of his dominion on earth. Gen 2:15-17

Then the Lord God made a suitable helper for the man so he would not be alone. This helper would be subordinate to him, equal before God as a child, but not equal in function as indicated by his naming her Eve, the mother of all the living. Gen 3:20

Since he carried responsibility for doing all God had said, he would be responsible for passing on to her what commandments the Lord had given to him. *'For it was Adam who was first created, and then Eve.'* 1 Tim 2:13

As God's representative authority made in His image and likeness Adam was to reflect the character and of his heavenly Father. He was to acknowledge the Father's rule, fulfil the Father's purpose and therefore obey the Father in all things. In this relationship he lived as a son to God who would partake of the Father's excellence if he obeyed the Father.

The deception in the garden

Satan began undermining God's plan for His creation on earth by attacking the principle foundation of man and woman's union as one flesh under God; *“Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.”* (Gen 2:24) with Adam being responsible for leadership and holiness.

When Satan begins when he starts with a distortion of God's word; *‘You shall not eat from any tree of the garden’?*” (Gen 3:1) Eve responds with her own exaggeration, *‘You*

shall not eat from it or touch it, or you will die.'

When Eve added '*touch*' to what God had commanded, she put forward her personal opinion and declared that God's word was not absolute for her. This signalled to Satan that she was open to deception and even more distortion of what God had said was absolutely true and binding. Then Satan responds with another lie. '*You surely will not die!*'

Gen 3:4

It is a dangerous thing we do if we consider adding too or taking away from the word of Almighty God. By adding her own idea she elevated herself in her own mind to a position of authority which she didn't have, all because of pride in her self estimation.

Satan then prompted Eve's pride and independence, and Eve began to look for reasons to justify doing what she was told not to do. She accepted Satan's word instead of turning to her husband for guidance. '*When*

the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate.' Instead of submitting to her husband as his helper to get the right word, she listened to Satan, relying on her independent attitude.

To have another opinion other than what God says is to dethrone God; it brings Him down to earth and domesticates Him so that He is treated as our servant instead of us remaining His.

In all this Adam was held responsible for failing to carry out his role as God's appointed head. The first need for a good marriage as one flesh is commitment to each other under God to stay true, was gone. Before there can be any true love there must be undying commitment and then the emotion of love can grow. Love is first a commitment to another for their highest good.

Disobedience causes suffering

As a result of Adam's disobedience the whole natural world would be a cause of suffering, and human relations between men and women would suffer as well.

Now, because of their disobedience, their commitment to God and each other was gone; so they were dead in their spirits to holiness and innocence; and unable to love as God intended. God's image in them was soiled and they hid from the one holy Almighty God.

'Then the LORD God called to the man, and said to him, "Where are you?" He said, "I heard the sound of You in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid myself." And He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" The man said, "The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me from the tree, and I ate." Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" And the woman said,

“The serpent deceived me, and I ate.” The LORD God said to the serpent, “Because you have done this, Cursed are you more than all cattle, And more than every beast of the field; On your belly you will go, And dust you will eat All the days of your life; And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel.”

To the woman He said, “I will greatly multiply Your pain in childbirth, In pain you will bring forth children; Yet your desire will be for your husband, And he will rule over you.” Then to Adam He said, “Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree about which I commanded you, saying, ‘You shall not eat from it’; Cursed is the ground because of you; In toil you will eat of it All the days of your life.”

Gen 3:9-17

Conflict became normal because of sin

To understand the phrase (*your desire will be for your husband, And he will rule over you*) we turn to the next chapter of Genesis where the same words are used as a warning to Cane. "*And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door; and its desire is for you, but you must master it.*"

Gen 4:7

This way of speaking about control and power are only found here in book of Genesis; and here we see the beginning of the marital struggle for control. Instead of the peace and cooperation they previously had in God's garden, now the woman's desire was to overcome the man as the head God had designated, and the man will want to rule in a harsh way which is consistent with their fallen human nature. This sorry state of affairs was not what God designed for mankind, but a consequence of their disobedience and pride, and allowed as a judgement according to the wisdom of God. This corruption of a once

holy relationship is the normal life for those who will not obey God.

God called out Adam who was hiding because he was the one responsible for providing headship in leading them both to righteousness before God. Adam was made responsible to maintain the dominion God had given him, and that dominion includes spiritual life as well as material life. And now we see in God's word that being head in a relationship has great responsibility.

Christ is head over all things

Since '*Christ is the head of every man, He laid down His life for every man. For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God.*' (Rom 6:10) Now in the same way man was to take responsibility for his woman. '*But I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of a woman, and God is the head of Christ.*'

1 Cor 11:3

So the man will be head in his family as Christ is the head of the Church. Therefore it is important to understand that headship means taking final responsibility, and this responsibility requires the authority to decide what is best to gain the greatest outcome for all according to the glory of God.

Since the Lord Jesus is responsible for His Church, He has full authority to decide what is best for His Church. Therefore the man is responsible for keeping his family in a godly manner. *‘He must be one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity.’* 1 Tim 3:4

Headship is to be supported by the helper, and the head is to support the helper. If the helper will not support the head in his responsibility under God, the man might as well be dead.

Headship was never intended to be harsh or uninformed; it was to always be according to God’s will to see those in Christ transformed into the image of His Son. Rom 8:29

Therefore as Jesus Christ loves the Church, so the husband will love his wife. Man was to love his wife as he loved and cherished his own body, for all those in Christ are to love their neighbour as themselves, wives even more so.

Jesus is the example for the husband to love his wife in the process of taking responsibility for leading his family into all truth and righteousness. *‘Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless. So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself; for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church, because we are members of His body.* Eph 5:25-30

Consequently, headship and the responsibility which goes with authority, does not mean man would be standing over anyone allotted to him, but instead he would prove to be a good example of humility in service. 1 Pet 5:3

Jesus said; *‘Whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave; just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.’* Matt 20:26-28

Love isn't demeaning but dignifies and builds up. Therefore the husband will listen to his wife even though he may have to make the final decision, he will be patient and kind, he will not exasperate or frustrate his wife or his children by being overly demanding, but he will be firm and persistent in building up his family in all humility so that they will be able to respect him and honour the Lord as they grow in grace.

When two people under God become one flesh, the two are to be surrendered to God and act as one for the will of God in loving each other.

And this is the love God wants us to show to each other. *'Love is patient, love is kind and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.'*

1 Cor 13:4-7

This is sacrificial love, it is not self seeking but seeking the highest good of the beloved. *"Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends."* John 15:13

Headship means husbands will remember wives and children have a free will in accord with the wisdom of God. Husbands therefore need to guide those in his care in the truth and

knowledge of God, so that his family can be encouraged to use their will in seeking to do the will of God. The best way for them to understand how that is done, is for the husband and father to set the best example as he follows the example set by Jesus Christ.

In response to the husband's obedience to the Lord, wives will be obedient to their husbands. *‘Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Saviour of the body. But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands in everything.’* (Eph 5:22-24) To be subject here means to place oneself into subjection under God's arrangement in submitting to the Lord's plan for their relationship under Him.

If one should argue that the husband doesn't have final authority in his family, then it also follows that Jesus Christ doesn't have

authority over His Church. This might be the thinking of unbelievers, but it cannot be the view of those who have become disciples of Jesus Christ to obey Him in all things. The husband will love, the wife will respect, and the children will follow their example and do what is right by obeying their parents.

By our example of steadfast love children need to discover that God wants to cherish them in His presence. That God is a dignifying God who desires to build us up and not put us down.

As much as possible we show by example that God is a God of love who wants us to love Him and do as He asks. By our example we show He is patient and kind towards those who please Him and not themselves. By our example of humble and consistent obedience we show the way to walk in His light.

Husband and wife's private intimacy

When a man and a woman marry, they become one flesh as they are united under

God. Their bodies are not their own so they can do as they please, they belong to one another. Husbands and wives are to cherish one another, this means they will have special affection for one another and in doing this; they will seek the highest good for each other.

'But because of immoralities, each man is to have his own wife, and each woman is to have her own husband. The husband must fulfil his duty to his wife, and likewise also the wife to her husband. The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does; and likewise also the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. Stop depriving one another, except by agreement for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer, and come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.'

1 Cor 7:2-5

Submitting in love to love

You cannot love without submitting; but you can submit without loving. Submitting love

seeks intimacy; unloving submission is alienating. Submitting love seeks the good of the other; unloving submission seeks to please self which is always at the expense of the other.

Real submission is seen in a life which seeks to really know intimately the one to whom we are submitting; be it Christ or those to whom God has joined us. This intimacy means having a desire to understand their thoughts, their passion, and their life's journey so we can assist them in achieving their highest good.

God requires our submission to Christ; and Christ requires submission amongst His children. This is especially true between husbands and wives. Wives submit to husbands as to Christ, and husbands lay down their lives for their wives in the same way Christ laid down His life in submitting to the Father.

God saves us for intimacy, with Himself first and with others. So our loving submission is the key to real intimacy with God and others.

Evidence of the indwelling Spirit who actively seeks God's will is our humble obedience in submission to Christ by following His instructions for life in intimacy with God.

There should be no Christian divorce

This holy union of a man and a woman is a lifelong commitment which does not allow either party to please themselves if they are to stay true to their word. 1 Cor 7:10-15

“FOR THIS REASON A MAN SHALL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER AND BE JOINED TO HIS WIFE, AND THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH”? So they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate.” “Because of your hardness of heart Moses permitted you to divorce your wives; but from the beginning it has not been this way. And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for

immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery.” Matt 19:5-6, 8-9

When men and women love one another as is required of God's children, they will faithfully follow the example given by God in the Bible and so will be no disputes. When men and women live according God's will in a Christian marriage, there would be no divorce because there will be no roving eye in the faithful follower of Christ; so therefore there will be no adultery. There will be no domestic violence or any other wilful acts of darkness for believers who walk in the light, who diligently put to death the flesh that remains.

Rom 8:13

Therefore there will be no attempt to break the marriage bond for any reason since God has made two people into one flesh. If despicable sin should arise in the marriage there are serious consequences.

God had joined Adam with Eve under His authority to live and work together for all time

according to His creation plan. To destroy what God had done was indeed grievous, and resulted in mans separation from the intimacy of their relationship with God; which would require the death of God's Son on a cross to reconcile. To destroy a marriage is no less to the innocent party and the solution is no less costly.

Marriages is a divine mystery

"This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband."

Eph 5:32-33

Christian marriages point towards the spiritual reality to come, which is eternal. Therefore the marriage of a Christian couple is to declare the great mystery of the Church as the bride of Christ (Eph 5:32) as husband and wife demonstrate their own commitment to divine sacrificial love in joyful human reverence.

As the Head of all things, Christ laid down His life so we can live with God as a holy people. In the same way the husband will lay down his life in order to present his wife as holy to the Lord.

This plan of God is only possible through the perfect sacrifice of God's perfect Son; so that we may receive perfect forgiveness and mercy, in order that we can partake of a new life perfected by the power of the Holy Spirit, so that we can walk with God as husband and wife as we are perfected in unity and love.

Abide in Him

Living water Resources

Come to the River

Christian Marriage

Revised



Compiled by
Robert C May

© 2018

cometotheriver@optusnet.com.au