

God's Standard of Marriage



God is a Matchmaker (Part 2)
by Derek Prince

In my introductory talk yesterday I emphasized that the Bible places a much greater importance upon marriage than most of us realize. I pointed out three ways in which the Bible emphasizes the importance of marriage. First of all, the record of human history begins and ends with a marriage; begins in the Garden of Eden with the marriage of Adam and Eve; it ends with the great climax of human history, the marriage supper of the Lamb. Second, marriage typifies the relationship of Christ to His church. The relationship of a human husband to his wife is a pattern of the relationship in the spiritual realm of Jesus Christ to His church. Thirdly, God Himself protects the sanctity of marriage. God has declared, "fornicators and adulterers God will judge." There's a special emphasis on God Himself intervening in judgment against those who break down the sanctity of marriage.

Today I'm going to speak about God's standard of marriage as revealed in creation and reinforced by the teaching of Jesus. We'll turn first to the teaching of Jesus and we'll find that this takes us back to God's purpose in creation. Jesus' standard of reference for what marriage should be was derived directly from the revelation of God's purpose in creating the first human beings. For a summary of the teaching of Jesus, I'm going to read a section from my book, the Marriage Covenant:

The essence of [the] teaching [of Jesus] on marriage is contained in a conversation He had with some Pharisees, recorded in Matthew 19: [verses] 3–9:

> "And some Pharisees came to Him, testing Him, and saying, 'Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any cause at all?' And He answered and said, 'Have you not read, that He who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, 'For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh'? Consequently they are no more two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate.' They said to Him, 'Why then did Moses command to give her a certificate and divorce her?' He said to them,

> '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 commits adultery.'"

We may sum up the teaching of Jesus in this passage in four successive statements:

1. The form of marriage that had become accepted in Israel under Judaism was below the level of God's will.
2. God's real purpose for marriage was expressed when He originally created man and woman.
3. In the initial union of man and woman they were so perfectly joined together that they lost their separate identities and became "one flesh."
4. It is the purpose of Jesus to restore marriage in the lives of His disciples to the original standard revealed at creation.

That's very important to see that when Jesus was questioned about marriage, He did not go back to the law of Moses but he went back to the record of creation. Of course, this was in respect for His Father, God. He accepted only His Father's original plan and standard for marriage as being fully valid.

So, we need to look back at the record of creation in the opening chapters of Genesis to find out more exactly and in detail what was God's purpose and God's standard for marriage, bearing in mind that God has never changed. His purpose and His standard are still the same today as they were in creation. Man may have sought to lower the standard, but God has never changed; He still holds the same standard.

Let's read now in Genesis 2, beginning at verse 18. I want to bring out four extremely important facts. First of all, marriage was God's decision, not Adam's. Genesis 2:18:

> "The Lord God said, 'It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.'"

It wasn't Adam who thought of marriage or desired a helper, it was God who saw his need and determined to provide it and provide it in His way.

The second fact, God formed Eve for Adam. Genesis chapter 2 verses 21–22:

> "So the Lord God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and closed up the place with flesh. Then the Lord God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man."

So the second fact there is that God formed Eve for Adam. Adam had nothing to do with that process. It was entirely God's doing. God knew what kind of a helper Adam needed and he took the responsibility of making exactly the right kind of helper for Adam.

The third fact is also contained in those verses that I've read; it is this: that God brought Eve to Adam. Adam didn't go out looking for a wife; he didn't search through the Garden saying, "Where will I find my wife?" but God actually brought the appointed wife to Adam. We'll read that verse again:

> "Then the Lord God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man."

God brought Eve to Adam.

The fourth fact is that God established the terms of their relationship. This is stated in Genesis 2:24. And these words are words that were spoken by God Himself.

> "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh."

The older translation says, "The man will leave his father and mother and will cleave to his wife." First there's a leaving, then there's a cleaving. That's God's appointed way. A man is released from all other commitments and relationships that would hinder his relationship with his wife. His relationship with his wife is to take precedence over every other relationship. He leaves, and then having left, he cleaves. A man who never really leaves can never really cleave. In other words, God gives this relationship priority over all other relationships. The man will leave his parents and cleave to his wife and the ultimate purpose is unity: "The two shall become one flesh."

Let me quickly review those four facts concerning the original creation of Adam and Eve and the marriage that was brought about between them. The four facts are these:

1. First, marriage was God's decision, not Adam's;
2. Secondly, God formed Eve for Adam;
3. Thirdly, God brought Eve to Adam;
4. Fourthly, God established the terms of their relationship. They were to cleave to one another, be

so united that they would become one flesh.

Now, it's my personal conviction, based on the teaching of Jesus and based on my own experience in life, that these principles have never been set aside by God but they represent God's standard for marriage in the first place in creation, and that they still represent God's standard for marriage. Where God is allowed to have His way in our lives, the same things will still be true as they were in the first creation. Let's look at what that implies for a moment.

First of all, the initiative is with God. Personally, I believe that committed believers do not make their own decision about marriage, it's God who makes the decision. He takes the initiative, He takes the responsibility, He makes the choice.

Second, the process of forming the wife for the husband is God's responsibility. I believe if young women would see that, it would give them a kind of reverence and a respect for God's work in their lives which would help them to become much better wives. Also, I believe men need to see that God accepts the responsibility for a committed believer to provide just exactly the right helper.

Thirdly, it was God who brought them together, and I believe that's still God's plan today. Where He wants a man and a woman united and their lives are committed to Him, God will arrange the circumstances and work things out in such a way that He will bring them together. God never leaves the initiative in these important things in the hands of man. He takes responsibility, He takes initiative.

And finally, God has determined the terms of the relationship. They are: to leave, to cleave and to become one flesh. Marriage is not an experiment; it's a total commitment of two persons, one to the other. To talk about a "trial marriage" is actually absurd. It's a denial of the very meaning of marriage. Marriage is not a trial, it's a commitment. There's a total leaving and a total cleaving. People who are not willing to leave and who are not willing to cleave cannot experience marriage on the level on which God has ordained it. For, as I've said already and I say it again, God has never lowered His standard.

Let's just recapitulate those four facts: the initiative is with God; the process of forming is with God; the bringing together is with God; the terms of the relationship are settled by God.

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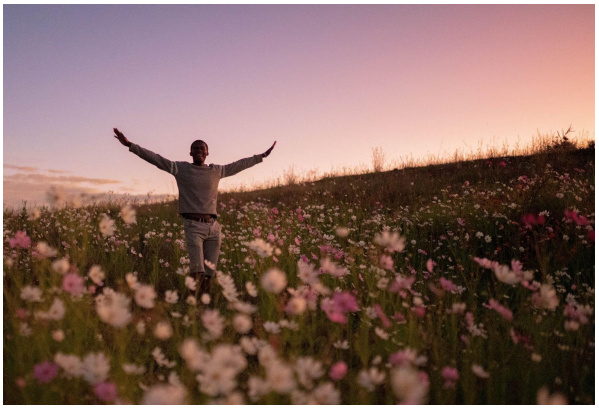

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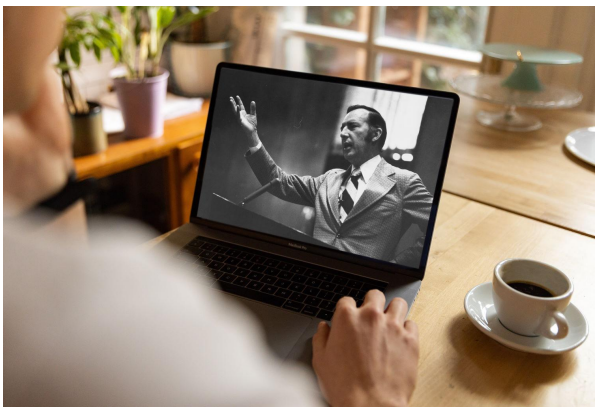

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