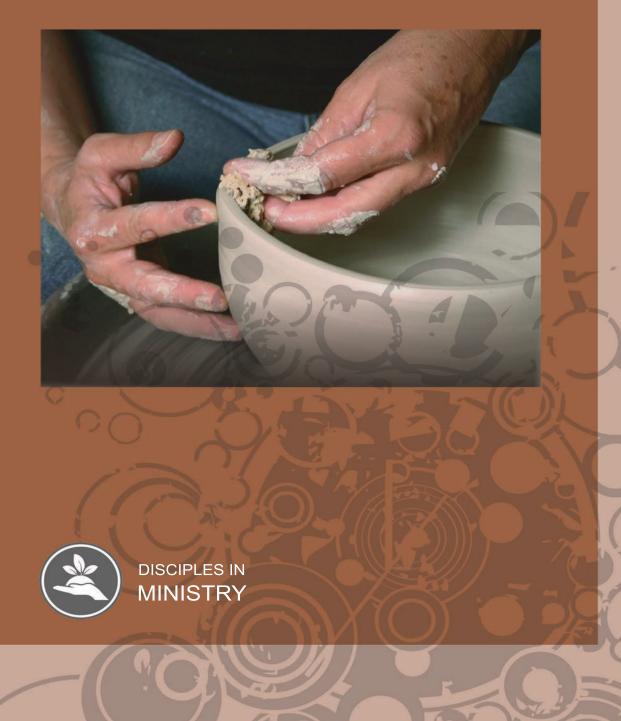
BIBLICAL BASIS OF MARRIAGE

MARRIAGE MINISTRIES 2



Biblical Basis of Marriage



Biblical Basis of Marriage

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Presentation

[®]he DISCIPLES IN MINISTRY series of self-study courses is designed for disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ who are intentionally willing to fulfill His command to "make disciples of all nations" (Matthew 28:20).

Disciples are followers of their teacher. In the case of Christ's disciples, we not only follow our Master, we also want to be like Him. We really can't even imitate Him. Christian discipleship is allowing Jesus to be the owner, the master and the Lord of all that we are. That is to say, that he has total control of our lives. When Christ Jesus is in absolute control, then He will begin to "be and do" in us, even more than we could "be and do" on our own. This radical concept of discipleship is for life.

Like any process, discipleship has its stages. The first is to receive Jesus as Savior and Lord and to learn that this means giving up our will, until we reach the special moment when Jesus takes full control of every aspect of our lives. At that moment, "it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose" (Philippians 2:13) in us. Without God's complete control, we cannot serve Him. Only after "being" can we move on to the stage of "doing."

The apostle Paul tells us that "we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do" (Ephesians 2:10). Now that we are part of the Body of Christ (the Church), and Jesus as the head controls us, we must find out how we can be of greater use to the body. The second part of discipleship is perfecting ourselves "for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up" (Ephesians 4:12).

These self-study notebooks will help us specialize in the call to serve Jesus Christ that God has designed for each of us. Now we are "a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light" (1 Peter 2:9). One of the best ways to announce the virtues of Jesus is by demonstrating who He is through a ministry in our local church, that is, by being an active part of his body.

This Disciples in Ministry program is comprised of six general courses and nine specialized courses in each specific ministry. The first six courses will guide us through the basic steps of discipleship: (1) Who is Jesus and what does it mean to follow him? (2) What does it mean to be in Christ? (3) What does it mean to be part of God's people? (4) What does it mean to grow in the likeness of Christ? (5) What does it mean to be a leader? (6) What does it mean to be a servant leader? The remaining nine courses will offer us specialized content in different ministries such as "Evangelism", "Lay Pastor", "Sunday School and Discipleship Ministries", "Communications", "Compassionate Ministries", "Youth", "Women", "Missions" and "Marriage".

Our prayer is that you will find your role in the "Body of Christ" and that this series of courses will help you become a disciple involved in ministry. For this reason God saved you and now you are part of the Body of Christ.

Dr. Christian Sarmiento REGIONAL DIRECTOR Church of the Nazarene South America he material you have in your hands is part of one of the courses of the Disciples in Ministry Project (DIM) that seeks "to equip the saints, to do the work of ministry" as established by the Word of God in Ephesians chapter 4 verse 12 (ISV).

This material has been prepared by different authors in order to provide you with a selfteaching resource to develop with excellence the ministry that the Lord has called you to carry out in his local church.

In no way is this material intended to replace a formal academic preparation for people whom God has called to fully dedicate their lives to ministry, because for this there are several institutions of theological education in the different countries of our Region.

How to use this material:

This course is divided into eight lessons, to be studied either individually or in groups. If it is possible to study the lessons in small groups we believe it will be of much greater benefit.

The material is designed for self-study and does not necessarily require a teacher; however, if a pastor or knowledgeable leader of your local church can help you, we are sure that such help will be very useful.

You can decide the best times to study each lesson. The method can be varied, and we hope that the lessons adjust to your schedule availability. We recommend that you study at least one lesson per week.

Before starting each lesson, please take into account the following:

- Spend time in prayer before you begin your study.
- Have a Bible handy so you can refer to the references given in each of the lessons.
- We recommend that you do one lesson at a time, taking the time necessary to answer the questions raised. Also, do the proposed activities and meet the established objectives.

In each lesson you will find different sections identified with their respective icons. Below we explain what each of these sections means.





OBJECTIVES: The objectives are the goals that you will meet by the end of the lesson. We recommend that you read them and at the end of the lesson ask yourself if they have been met. These objectives are aimed at directing your values, shaping your convictions as a believer, and knowing what you need to fulfill your ministry.

MAIN IDEAS: In this section you will find a summary of the most important aspects of the lesson. What you read here is what will be developed in more detail throughout the content. We suggest, at the end of the lesson, to go back to the Main Ideas and reaffirm the central concepts that you learned.



Why foday do we observe Sunday and not Saturday as the day of the Lord in our churches? . Biblical Evidence Acts 20:7 asys: To the first day of the week we came together to break bread". 2. Evidence from the "Fathers" of the Church: St. Ignatius of Antioch (AD 107) said: "Those who walked in ancient practices attained unto newness of hope, no longer keping Sababaths, but according to the Lord's way of life _" **TEACHING HELPS:** In the narrow columns of each lesson you will find some instructions related to the topic that is being developed. In most cases they are questions or observations that will help you understand and dialogue about the contents.

SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES: These are notes with additional information that will allow you to delve into the content you are studying.

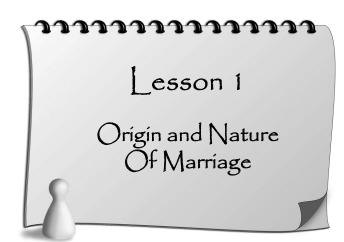


ACTIVITIES: At the end of each lesson you will find an exercise that will reinforce what you have learned through questions, activities or practical instruction. We suggest you dedicate the time necessary to complete each activity; this will allow you to selfassess your learning.

We encourage you to continue in your spiritual development as a leader of the church of Jesus Christ. God has reserved for you a wonderful ministry in his local church, and we hope that this course will guide and instruct you to fulfill this sacred task.

Origin and Nature Of Marriage

_esson 1





 Examine the origin and nature of marriage according to the Scriptures.



- The origin of marriage is in God himself. God was the one who perfectly devised, designed, and implemented the institution of marriage.
- God (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) was involved in the creation of the human being (male and female) and in the institution of marriage (heterosexual and monogamous) as the central nucleus of humanity.
- Marriage presents the image of God to the world through the daily experience of grace and forgiveness, mercy and love between spouses.

Introduction

s we approach the Scriptures and search for the origin and nature of marriage we cannot avoid the first two chapters of Genesis. On the contrary, we must search here first because this is the beginning of all things. Here we find the Creator and His creation as He created it. Everything recorded in these 56 verses contains a masterful exposition that's basic and fundamental for a proper understanding of everything about God and his creation. Let's see, then, what we can find out about marriage.

The Origin of Marriage

Where does marriage come from? What is its origin? Who was behind the idea? Does marriage have an actual origin, or is it merely the result of what's natural in all human beings: being born, reproducing and dying?

When looking for the origin of marriage, almost always, our mind goes to Genesis 2:24 as the fundamental verse of marriage. This isn't bad, all of Christianity has thought of it as the key verse for centuries. And that's because we understand that on the sixth day, after God created everything, He commanded the two human beings (a man and a woman), to leave their families of origin and to totally unite (literally merge) in the deepest relationship that a man and a woman can experience, and develop a common venture called marriage, "... and they become one flesh."

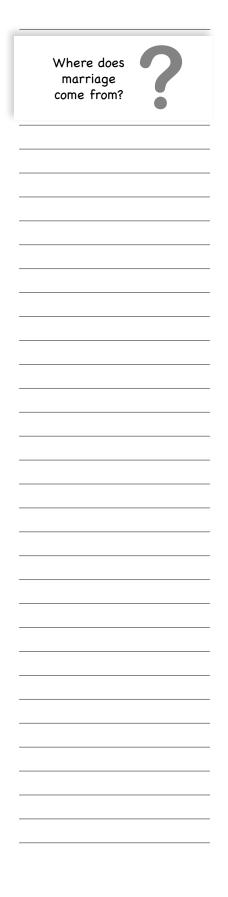
Now the question arises, was it at this moment when God created marriage? If we carefully read from the beginning of the book of Genesis, we will notice that everything began much earlier. In Genesis 1:1-25 we read about how God created a perfect scenario, completely harmonious, where each created thing had its place in the overall picture, its reason for being and a well defined objective. Nowhere in the text are we led to think that God was creating according to a need that was presented to him. Nor can we think that the creation of humankind (male and female) occurred because God

realized that something was missing from creation, no! Creation was a well thought out plan by the Creator. He planned everything. Otherwise, we may ask ourselves; For whom was everything created if not for humanity (adam)¹?

Marriage was not an afterthought God had after He created humankind, it was always part of His plan.

As we continue reading we see in Genesis 1:26, in the conversation that God had with the trinity, the evidence of the creation of marriage is proposed with the idea of creating humankind in their image and likeness and that humankind would consist of two genders (male and female) and would be capable of reproducing and "...filling the earth ..." (Genesis 1:28). Therefore, we can say that God intended for there to be marriage from the very beginning. Note that while other living creatures were created "according to their kinds", the human being (male and female) was created "in our image"; and instead of saying "let there be" He says "let us make" which demonstrates his direct intervention. And so, marriage was not an afterthought God had after He created humankind, it was always part of His plan. "This means that, in some way, we are the image of God in the way the sexes complement each other. As a man and as a woman, we make visible the invisible mystery of God".² From the beginning, God held man and woman in His heart and mind as two beings with exactly the same origin and the same nature that would model marriage.

Jesus emphasized this point. We read in Mark 10:2-12 and Matthew 19:1-12 that Jesus was confronted by the Pharisees about divorce. It's important to note that the Pharisees' question was based on Deuteronomy 24:1-4, but Jesus ignored that and referred them to the origin (which they knew), indicating that from the beginning the Creator made them male and female and that they would leave their nuclear family, be united as



Matthew 19:3 says: "For any and every reason". This phrase alludes to the dispute between two theological schools of thought over the meaning of Deuteronomy 24:1. The Shammai school took the strict and unpopular position of divorce only in the case of adultery, while the Hillel school took the liberal and popular position of an easy divorce for any passing whim of the husband. A.T. Robertson. Commentary on the Greek text of the New Testament. Clie Publisher, Spain, 2003 pp. 51–52. one flesh, and no one should separate what God had joined together. Convincingly, Jesus presents God as the Creator of humankind, of

only two genders (male and female), and of marriage for life without interruption from others. In his response, Jesus concluded by saying "So they are no longer two, but one flesh; Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate" (Matthew 19:6). Jesus could have responded using many other arguments but he chose to take them to the very beginning to make the origin of marriage clear. Its origin is God.

The Nature of Marriage

Have you ever heard that popular saying that says "chip off the old block?" It means that the "chip" has the same characteristics as the "block" from which it came, and is normally used to point out the resemblance between a parent and their child(ren). In a broader sense, it refers to the fact that everything, in one way or another, bears resemblance to its origin or where it came from. Marriage is no exception. If we understand that the origin of marriage comes from God, then we must be aware of the implications that this has on the nature of marriage.

First of all, marriage is sacred — sacred in every way and from start to finish. It's sacred because it has its origin in God, who is holy in his essence and created marriage as the sacred union between one man and one woman until death do they part. Through his presence, God Himself sanctified the marriage union by establishing marriage between a man and a woman (Matthew 19:4-6). Let us remember that marriage was created before sin entered the world and God created humankind and marriage to fulfill his purpose (Genesis 1:28-31). God established marriage so that spouses would see God in each other because they are both created in the image and likeness of God. Marriage is a fundamental means of connecting with the Creator, where in a practical and daily way we must live our relationship of faith

Why do we say

that marriage

is holy?

that brings us closer to Him (Matthew 7:12; 1 Corinthians 13:4– 8a; Ephesians 5:21–33 and Hebrews 13:4, among others). Very often we see how this sacred union is dishonored and held in low esteem by the way society disregards the holy nature of marriage and substitutes practices that are contrary to God's plan.

God established marriage so that spouses would see God in each other because they are both created in the image and likeness of God.

Secondly, marriage was designed to be heterosexual and monogamous. God created male and female, one for the other. As already mentioned, Genesis 2:24 says that the man and woman will be united and become one flesh. This is a clear reference to a relationship of total unity that includes the sexual union between one man and one woman, two physically different (heterosexual) beings who are capable of a union in which they complement each other. A man and a woman who, by uniting in marriage, also join with God in fulfilling the divine purpose to: "...multiply." Heterosexuality is not God's mistake, it was his plan from the beginning. It's the creation of God.

Monogamy is part of the nature of marriage that God created. There is nothing in the Bible that allows us to think of another way of coexistence. God proposed the exclusive union of a single man with a single woman, although today, many question the validity of monogamy using different arguments to defend other possibilities of coexistence. Likewise, we can find research that corroborates the value of monogamy for spouses and their children. The American sociologist Paul Amato writes: "Compared with children who grow up in a stable family consisting of a father and a mother, children born out of wedlock grow up to be adults with less education, lower incomes, worse professional status and more chances of being unemployed (i.e. not have a job or are not in school), daughters are more likely to have a child out of wedlock, to experience troubled marriages, to have more divorces, and to have more symptoms of depression."3

Thirdly, marriage is good. Everything that God created is good. In the entire creative process, God stopped five times to contemplate his handiwork and each time referred to it as "good", "And God saw that it was good" (Genesis 1:10; 12; 18; 21 and 25). Then, after the creation of humankind and marriage, looking over everything he had created, God concluded that "it was very good" (Genesis 1:31). This is an expression that Why do you

think people

today reject

heterosexual and monogamous

marriage?

Do you agree with the following statement: "Marriage is more than just a private emotional relationship. It also represents a social good..." Share your thoughts. undoubtedly refers to the conclusion of a well thought out and executed plan, a plan that included humankind living in marriage.

The only time that God expressed himself negatively was when he saw the man (adam) alone, and said "It is not good..." He was saying that man was created to live in community, not in solitude, but in society. He is a social being by nature. Journalist Catherine Price, in her recent book "How to Break Up With Your Phone: The 30-Day Plan to Take Back Your Life", says that "Human beings are social creatures, and we desperately want to feel like we belong. What's particularly strange is that we don't just care about other people's judgment, we ask for it. We post photos and comments to show others that we're lovable, popular, and, on a more existential plane, that we matter, and then obsessively look at our phones to see if other people—or at least their on-line profiles—are in agreement."⁴

Nowadays, neuroscience affirms that the most important thing for the mental health of a human being is the interaction with another human beings. Hence, marriage is good; it's

good for human beings (man and woman) because it allows them the possibility of putting themselves aside and entering into a relationship with another person and sharing the entirety of themselves with that person. "Marriage is more than just a private emotional relationship. It also represents a social good... Communities with abundant healthy marriages tend to offer more well-being to men, women and children than those with high levels of divorce, out-of-wedlock

The human being is a social being by nature. Neuroscience affirms that the most important thing for the mental health of human beings is interaction with another human being. ... marriage is good, It's good for human beings because it allows them the possibility of putting themselves aside and entering into a relationship with another person and sharing the entirety of themselves with that person.

births, conflict, or violence. Furthermore, the benefits of a strong marriage culture cut across lines of race, culture, and social class. From a public health perspective, the impact of marriage is clearly important."⁵

According to the original model, the woman and the man living in marriage, was considered "very good" (Genesis 1:31) since they were located in the right place in the complete picture of creation.

Origin and Nature of Marriage

Fourth, marriage is the image of God. It's easy to think that man and woman are created in the image of God, but not marriage. In a world stained by sin and where marriage has been strongly attacked, it's difficult for us to think that this relationship that unites man and woman in marriage is the image of God.

It's no accident that throughout the Bible, from Genesis to Revelation, the analogy of marriage is used to demonstrate God's relationship to his people and Christ's relationship to his church. There are an abundance of references that we find in the Word of God about the patience, love, forgiveness and mercy of God towards his people and the sacrificial love and total surrender of Christ for his church. These are all characteristics that God demands of man and woman living in marriage (Hosea, Ephesians 5:21-33). "Marriage can be that holy place, a site of a relationship that proclaims God's love to this world."... "As long as a couple is married, they continue to display — however imperfectly — the ongoing commitment between Christ and his church."

A man and woman who unite their lives in the bond of marriage have the wonderful opportunity of bringing the image of God to the world; through the daily experience of grace and forgiveness, mercy and love, between spouses, God becomes visible to all.

If marriage is by nature the image of God, why do you think there are so many divorces and unhappy marriages among those who profess faith in Jesus Christ?



Activities

Instructions

What new things did you learn?



Do you think what you learned in this lesson is important for marriage ministry? Why?

How can you practically apply what you have learned to your own life?

Purpose Of Marriage







 Know God's purposes for marriage in light of the Scriptures and how incorporating these purposes in daily life helps to enrich the marriage relationship.



- God created marriage with clear purposes that we must not lose sight of as time goes by.
- Companionship is vital for the human being and God recognized it when forming the first marriage.
- Joy in marriage was part of God's plans from the beginning. We must resuscitate this principle in marriages today.
- Procreation was one of the first mandates of God and with it He gave us the blessing and privilege of motherhood and fatherhood.

Why Get Married?

hen you ask a bride and groom why they got married, you'll received many different answers. Some people think that marriage will be the end to all their problems, that at the moment they get married all conflict will disappear, like in the stories "... they got married and lived happily ever-after..."; others reason that they'll no longer be alone, and still others say that they want to build a life together and love each other.

Marriage is made more difficult when so many expectations are placed on marriage without clearly stating them before taking the big step.

"He doesn't make me happy", "She doesn't meet my expectations", "He wasn't like that when we dated", "I feel like I never loved him" are some of the phrases that resonate after a couple has been married for awhile. These declarations are generally focused on "ME" without thinking about the other person or how to work together towards a common purpose to achieve a union that will last through the years.

If we understand that marriage is born in the heart of God, we must understand its purposes in the light of his Word. "The scripture then concludes in Genesis 2:24 with the statement that the man (ish) will leave father and mother and unite himself with his woman (isha) and that they will become one flesh. The obvious conclusion is that marriage is the purpose of God's creation of male and female."¹

We understand that marriage was intended and created by God, but what is its purpose?

Companionship

"Our friends recently celebrated their 40th wedding anniversary. When I asked Bill the secret of their marital success, he responded, 'Iced tea.' 'Iced tea?' I asked. 'What does iced tea have to do with a successful marriage?' I will never forget Bill's response. He said that at the end of nearly every day for the last 40 years, he and Ruth sat in the swing on the back porch with glasses of iced tea, just spending time together."²

The origin of everything is found in the book of Genesis, and marriage and its purposes are no exception. Having completed much of creation and claiming it to be good, God focused on humankind, by creating Adam. God allowed him to enjoy everything he had created except for the "tree of the knowledge of good and evil" (Genesis 2:16–17).

In Genesis 2:18 we read that God, after having created man and giving him the instructions, declared, "It is not good for the man to be alone." How incredible to think that man was in a perfect place, with the perfect conditions and with everything he needed, but he lacked someone like himself with whom to share all the wonderful things that God had created. In verse 20b it says "But for Adam no suitable helper was found." So, from these two verses we see that loneliness was never God's original plan, and neither was it the ideal condition for man. Even though man had a relationship with God he needed someone like himself (made in the image and likeness of God) with whom he could have companionship and fulfill God's purposes.

We know that God created us to be social beings; therefore a life of solitude, without the company of others, is very difficult. We are born into a family, we grow up within a family, and then we become part of an educational institution and we spend countless hours with our classmates until we complete our formal education. We are constantly with people, friends, who we spend time with in activities, sports, youth church events, etc. It's interesting to note that in prisons or jails, when a person is to be punished, the best method is to isolate them. Human beings were created for relationship and to live in community.



Companionship is vital for humankind, and God recognized it when he created the first married couple. This fact was accepted and appreciated by Adam. We read Adam's response in Genesis 2:23 (NLT) "At last!' The man exclaimed. 'This one is bone from my bone, and flesh from my flesh! She will be called "woman", because she was taken from "man"."' His statement tells us that he saw someone like himself, neither superior like God nor inferior like the animals, but an equal he could live in harmony with, have a good relationship with and share all the wonderful things that God had created. We are social beings by nature; sharing with one another makes us feel alive and makes us recognize ourselves as people.

Joy

Joy "is an emotion of contentment and pleasure. It doesn't need to be exuberant to be deep and real" (Beacon Dictionary of Theology, USA). Marriage, God's perfect creation, was designed for man and woman to share

Marriage, God's perfect creation, was designed for man and woman to share life and rejoice in God's creation.

life and rejoice in God's creation. The man's cry of joy reveals this when he meets woman and recognizes her as an equal, "At last!' The man exclaimed. 'This one is bone from my bone, and flesh from my flesh! She will be called "woman", because she was taken from "man"" Genesis 2:23 NLT.

In the Bible we find that different life situations produce joy. For example, the birth of a baby (Luke 2:10), or the fulfillment of divine purpose (John 15:11; Acts 8:7–8), along with others.

Isaiah 62:5 (NLT) says: "Your children will commit themselves to you, O Jerusalem, just as a young man commits himself to his bride. Then God will rejoice over you as a bridegroom rejoices over his bride" (Isaiah 62:5 NLT). The idea of joy between spouses is born from the very heart of God. The joy of God for those who serve him is compared with the joy that spouses experience in their relationship.

We see that God's deep desire is for joy to be found in marriage. "May your fountain be blessed, and may you rejoice in the wife of your youth." (Proverbs 5:18)

Today, why do many of the illustrations or marriage jokes portray the absence of joy and enjoyment in the marriage relationship? Joy and enjoyment don't seem to be part of the marriages around us. On the contrary, it seems impossible that the words marriage and joy would go together. It's sad to see that married couples have no joy in sharing their lives together and they settle for an unhappy situation or they leave.

If we don't have joy in our lives, we'll not be able to share joy with our spouse. Are you joyful? If our lives are not joyful, we'll never be able to share joy with our spouse.

According to Jesus, the second greatest commandment is "Love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22:39). Jesus' response is interesting. He didn't just say "love your neighbor," but he said "love your neighbor as yourself." So how can we love our neighbor if we don't love ourselves? First we must learn to love ourselves and then with that love, we can love our closest neighbor, our spouse. The same thing happens with joy. How can we expect to share joy with our spouse if there is no joy in our lives?

Once we learn to enjoy the different situations that touch our lives, and we seek to do things that bring joy to our lives, we will infect our spouse with joy. Instead of blaming our spouse for the absence of joy, we need to look for joy and then spread joy by finding good things in our lives that bring joy. It's important that we find joy in the things we share together.

Genuine love compels people to want their spouse to have joy in their life before receiving joy for themselves. When this happens, both sides reciprocally striving for joy in the other, joy becomes a real part of married life.

Procreation

One of the purposes of marriage is to give life. God put it this way: "And God blessed them, and said to them, 'Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth..." (Genesis 1:28). After creating humankind and making them male and female, the mandate was that they were to reproduce, have children, have a large family and fill the earth. (Obviously, the fulfillment of this mandate was not only for the first couple). This is one of

the clearest mandates that God gave at the beginning of the world. God's original plan was for man and woman to unite and from that union produce children that would transcend them.

God's original plan was for man and woman to unite and from that union produce children that would surpass them. What would you say to a Christian couple who decide not to have children in order to fulfill their professional dreams?

Children are a gift that God gives to a marriage. "Children are a gift from the Lord; they are a reward from him" (Psalm 127:3 NLT). Since they are a gift from God we must take care of them, love them, guide them, help them grow and teach them to be independent people.

In Genesis 12:2-3 we see God's promise to Abram that states that through his offspring all the peoples of the earth would be blessed. What a blessing would be the one that would come through his son. Just one son was all that was necessary to begin the generations that would bring blessing to all the peoples of the earth. On the other hand, children are followed by grandchildren and these are a greater blessing for grandparents. "Grandchildren are the crowning glory of the aged; parents are the pride of their children" (Proverbs 17:6 NLT) Just as children who follow the path of the Lord are a blessing for parents (Proverbs 22:6), parents who live lives that honor and fear God are a blessing and security to their children and they give their children assurance in their faith. "Whoever fears the Lord has a secure fortress and for their children it will be a refuge" (Proverbs 14:26).

Before entering into marriage, it's important that couples talk about children and decide when and how many children they would like to have.

Children, according to God's plan, are meant to be part of the marriage experience that leads to creating a family. It's a big challenge and very enriching to a married couple to see their children grow, mature, and develop until they become independent people who lead their own lives. It's seeing new lives that grow and learn something new every day and go from being totally dependent to becoming fully independent adults.

It's a big job to accompany children as they grow, giving instruction and guidance and to help them find the path which they will follow throughout their lives (Proverbs 4:1,5:7).

Although children are very important and are the fruit of marital love, they should never be placed above the marriage relationship or become the cause of a marriage relationship to deteriorate. Married couples must understand that

Although children are very important and are the fruit of marital love, they should never be placed above the marriage relationship or become the cause of a marriage relationship to deteriorate. children are transitory. Marriage is the beginning, then children will come, and children will leave and the married couple will be alone again to continue their life together. For this reason, the marriage relationship must be cultivated and enriched over time without losing sight of the place of priority that the marriage relationship has.

Sometimes married couples today put their personal interests, pleasures, and fulfillment ahead of raising children. There are many reasons that couples have for refusing to have children, but it's necessary to examine oneself to see if these reasons are not the product of selfishness and the refusal to dedicate oneself to the formation of another life that will require, for a limited time, much of us.

It's honorable to think that God entrusted humankind (male and female) with the formation and care of another human being and, in this way, he delegated the continuity of humanity to us. Just as our parents did with us (although they may not have been perfect) we must seek to be the best parents we can (knowing that we will not be perfect either).

On the other hand, we find couples who for various reasons cannot conceive; this should not be an impediment to investing their lives in the lives of little ones that need parents to raise them, train them and accompany them as they grow. An option for those who cannot have children may be adoption. Although these children will not be biological, they will be children of the heart. Giving love, protection and education to children who have been given up for adoption for different reasons can be a wonderful option. For believers in Christ, this decision must be made conscientiously, understanding that just like those who have biological children, God gives them the responsibility of being stewards of these lives.



Activities

Instructions

Summarize each of the purposes of marriage in a way that would be easy to share with a married couple:

Companionship: _____

Joy: _____

Procreation: _____

Love, The Perfect Bond

Lesson 3





- Recognize that God established principles for marriage.
- Understand that true love is one of the crucial principles established by God for marriage.
- Understand the importance of taking care of love, the bond that unites a couple and allows for growth and stability within the marriage union.
- Identify true love according to the Scriptures.

- After creating man and woman and placing them in a perfect environment, God himself officiated their marriage and established the principles that were to govern their lives together.
- The principle of love is crucial for marriage and has two parts: (1) God's love that is a love without measure towards humankind, and (2) that same love of God as the model to love your neighbor, beginning with your spouse.
- God's love is "agape" and its four fundamental aspects are: decision, action, commitment and passion.

Principles of Marriage

principle is the first instance of the being of a thing. "A primary source: ORIGIN." The word principle also means "a basic idea or rule that explains or controls how something happens or works."² Many times we use this word in the plural, and we say "that person has no principles." What we should really say is "that person doesn't have good principles," since all people have principles that govern their lives. However, in many cases the principles that people live by are not in accordance with the Word of God. When we look at it in the light of Scripture, principles are fundamental and determine our daily life. So, to apply this to marriage, we need to look for the principles of marriage that the Creator established in his Word.

The first home we read about in the Bible is that of Adam and Eve, the first human beings created by God. After creating them and putting them in a perfect environment, God himself officiated their marriage and established the principles that would govern their lives together. These principles, when followed, would lead them to the abundant life that God proposed from the beginning for humankind and that Jesus reaffirmed when he proclaimed: "... I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly" (John 10:10 RSV).

Beginning with this lesson, we will discuss each of the principles that God established for marriage from the first chapters of Genesis. We'll start with the principle of love.

Why do couples say they lost

the love that

at one time

brought them together?

The Principle of Love

"We got divorced because it just doesn't work anymore." "We're done raising our youngest son so there's no point in staying together anymore." "There's nothing keeping us together." "I guess I never loved him." "I don't love her anymore." "The love is over." These are some of the phrases we have heard from couples who want to end their marriages. Are these statements correct? How did these couples lose the love that one day united them? Does love have an expiration date?

Today more than ever Christian couples are getting divorced more easily than they are getting married. What's going on? Where are we failing? Does love really come to an end, as is commonly said?

Looking back at Genesis, if there is one thing we can be sure was present at creation, it was love. All of the followers of Jesus maintain that God is love (1 John 4:8), which leads us to understand that the motive for all of God's actions is love. It's his essence. It's who he is. Throughout the Bible we find God expressing his love in multiple ways. By carefully reading the creation account we can observe the love of God moving: His plan, His dedication, the details, the harmony in creation, the freedom to create, the gift of

Himself in humankind (image and likeness) and the mission given to man and woman making them his collaborators in his creation. Everything is for love.

The principle of love is crucial to marriage and it has two parts: the love that God gives us, and the love that God asks us to give others.

The Love of God: A Love Without Measure for Humankind

We are fruit of God's love: firstly because he created us (Genesis 1:26–28) and secondly because he provides a way for us to receive salvation and eternal life (John 3:16). We have often heard the Bible referred to as a love letter from God to us, and for good reason. The Bible is a record

of all of God's actions on behalf of humankind in which he does nothing more than tell them that he loves them, and that he loves them with an everlasting love (Jeremiah 31:3).

We are fruit of God's love: firstly because he created us (Genesis 1:26-28) and secondly because he provides a way for us to receive salvation and eternal life. (John 3:16).

In your own words, how

would you

define agape

love?

God's love is "agape" love. Scholar William Barclay in his book *Greek Words of the New Testament* says: "Agape love has to do with the mind. It is not a mere emotion that spontaneously arises in our hearts, but a principle by which we deliberately live. Agape love is intimately related to the will. It is a conquest, a victory, a feat. No one ever loved his enemies; but getting to do it is a true conquest of all our natural and emotional inclinations. This agape love is the faculty of loving what is not lovable, of loving people we don't like."³

Agape love is central to God's written revelation. The 10 Commandments given to Moses were based on this love, and Jesus summed up the life of his followers in the fulfillment of two commandments that are based on agape love (Mark 12:30-31). In his last days, Jesus gave his disciples a new commandment which had to do with the practice of agape love (John 13:34-35).

The apostle Paul wrote about how God loved us. "But God demonstrates his own love (agape) for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). In this way God showed humankind agape love in practice. A love that seeks a way to elevate the other person regardless of the cost. Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 5:21: "For God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, so that we could be made right with God through Christ" (NLT). Everything is for love.

The Love of God: Our Model To Love Humankind

The apostle Paul further developed this line of thought and showed a more excellent way: agape love (1 Corinthians 13). This passage is probably the most explicit about what agape love is and isn't, as well as what agape love does and doesn't do. The apostle affirmed that agape love is: patient and kind; and it's not: envious, boastful, or proud. He continued affirming that agape love: rejoices in the truth, always protects, always trusts, always hopes and always perseveres; and it doesn't dishonor others, it's not self-seeking, it's not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs and does not delight in evil; love never fails. This is an exact description of God incarnate in Jesus — walking through the dusty streets of Palestine — a living example of agape love. Although 1 Corinthians is a passage addressed to everyone in general and not to spouses in particular, there's nothing to indicate that it doesn't have a perfect application in the context of marriage. Furthermore, Paul's analogy in Ephesians 5:21–33 shows how agape love is lived out in marriage. Starting with the relationship that Christ has with his church, Paul points out that marriage is a relationship of humility, respect, love and surrender.

It's very easy to understand God's love for humankind, but it's extremely difficult to understand that love is the example for relationships with one another (John 13:34), beginning with our spouse. It's very common in the face of an urgent situation in marriage, for the spouses to ask, "How should I love my spouse? Until when? What else should I do?" To these questions, the apostle Paul answers, "...just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her" (Ephesians 5:25).

The love proposed by God in his Word is like a twosided coin: on one side, God's love is a love without measure towards all humankind, and on the other side, that same love of God is the model of how we are to love our neighbor, beginning with our spouse.

Next let's look at the different aspects of agape love in marriage.





Love |s A Decision

Frequently, love is associated with infatuation. It would be valid to say it's often a "cheap" infatuation that's misunderstood. In our consumer society, "falling in love" is just

When asked; "How should I love my spouse?", the apostle Paul answers, "as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her."

l ove, The Perfect Bond

From a personal perpective, thinking about your own marital relationship, answer the following questions: "Am I patient and kind? Am I envious, boastful, or proud? Do I rejoice in the truth? Do I always protect, always trust, always hope, always persevere? Am I self-seeking, easily angered, or hold grudges? Do I delight in evil? Will I ever stop loving my spouse?"

another idea where things are used and discarded, are priced according to the market value (supply and demand) and gained or lost according to the degree of satisfaction that the consumer feels.

When love is based on emotions, it fluctuates, it lives or dies at the rate of what the other person gives or contributes to the relationship. It's superficial. Once, a woman who was married for the second time said about her husband: "He no longer gives anything to the relationship". Very clearly, she understood that for that kind of love to stay alive the other person had to make it exciting. It's similar to buying something and discarding it when it's no longer useful or when it stops providing the service for which it was manufactured and purchased.

It's a fatal mistake to think that love only involves the heart or rather emotions. In fact, the Bible warns us about that when it says "The human heart is the most deceitful of all things, and desperately wicked. Who really knows how bad it is?" (Jeremiah 17:9 NLT).

The love that God shows us in his Word is agape love, which is more than emotion, it is a decision, it is a principle for life. It was agape love that led Jesus to die on the cross for humanity, and it's agape love that Jesus requires of his disciples. It's a love that starts with a personal decision and

that's given entirely to another person. It comes from deep inside. It's a love that doesn't end, that seeks to give before receiving and is nourished by seeking the good and happiness of the other person. It's a love that loves even when it doesn't feel like it and the other person doesn't deserve to be loved.

In the last decade, studies have been published that have revealed the role played by various parts of the brain (the prefrontal cortex, the hypothalamus, the thalamus, the amygdala, and the hippocampus) in love.

"Yes, this spouse might be difficult to love at times, but that's what marriage is for — to teach us how to love. Allow your marriage relationship to stretch your love and to enlarge your capacity for love — to teach you to be a Christian. Use marriage as a practice court, where you learn to accept another person and serve him or her."⁴

What do you think of this statement: "May your marriage stretch your love and increase your capacity to love, teaching you to be a Christian."

Love, The Perfect Bond

Love |s Action

The vows that spouses make during the wedding ceremony commit them to specific actions towards each other and to love each other throughout their lives together. These vows are important for two reasons: (1) because the vows made during the wedding ceremony are made in the presence of God and their non-compliance is a serious matter to Him (Ecclesiastes 5:1-7); and (2) because the vows you made of your own free will to your spouse can only be fulfilled through actions on your part.

Sometimes we get the impression that the wedding ceremony is the end and not the beginning of married life. The reason we get this impression is that many couples, after beginning life together and getting into a routine, complain that their spouse has stopped doing this or that "thing". These "things" can range from not giving gifts, notes or surprising their spouse with something nice, to issues that have to do with hurtful and derogatory statements and attitudes instead of the kindness and care that the Word of God shows us should prevail in our marriages (Matthew 7:12; Mark 12:31; John 13:15; 34–35; Ephesians 4:2–3; 5:21– 33; Colossians 3:18–19; 1 Peter 3:7).

Write your and your spouses names on the lines. Read the promise, marking the verbs and reflect on its fulfillment.

"______, will you have ______ to be your wedded wife (husband), to live together after God's ordinance in the holy estate of matrimony? Will you love, comfort, honor, and keep her (him), in sickness and in health; and forsaking all others, keep yourself only unto her (him), so long as you both shall live?"

The agape love that Jesus Christ modeled for us is action, pure action! It's an action that is unconditionally given, not a response to something received. It's just the act of giving. "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16).

Discuss the following verse: "Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen" (1 John 4:20). "Love...which is distinct from "being in love" is not merely a feeling. It is a deep unity, maintained by the will and deliberately strengthened by habit; reinforced (in Christian marriages) by the grace which both partners ask for, and receive, from God. They can have this love for each other even at those moments when they do not like each other; as you love yourself even when you do not like yourself... "Being in love" first moved them to promise fidelity: this quieter love enables them to keep the promise. It is on this love that the engine of marriage is run: being in love was the explosion that started it."⁵

Love s Compromise

As has already been said, agape love is a decision, a beginning of a new way of life and a commitment to the end. This means that the decision to love will imply an unconditional commitment. In fact, "Divorce represents our inability to hold to Jesus' command. It's giving up on what Jesus calls us to do. If I can't love my wife, how can I love the homeless man...? How can I love the drug addict or the alcoholic?"⁶ and how can I love my neighbor or my enemy? (Matthew 5:38-48). The apostle of love was very emphatic when he wrote: "Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen." (1 John 4:20). Many times we forget that our spouse is "our brother"; they are our "neighbor" whom we must love as we love ourselves.

Today, commitment seems to be shunned by those who wish to live together. New ways of coexistence are invented all the time, and behind them is a resistance to commitment. And it's because with commitment, there's no turning back, it's for life; what commitment offers is the opportunity to renew yourself every day as you constantly work as a couple to be better.

We're talking about a true sense of commitment, which will be seen all of the time. We give more time, energy and money to what we are more committed to. Jesus said it this way "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Matthew 6:21). Commitment in a relationship will become more evident when there are obstacles to overcome. If the commitment is strong, all the time, energy and money will be invested to overcome the obstacles and continue together. On the other hand, when the commitment is weak or doesn't exist, the obstacles will simply be avoided and no solution will be found.

Love |s Passion

Today the phrase "making love" has become popular as a synonym for having sexual relations. This, in the minds of many, undermines true love and true sexual intimacy. Nothing is further from reality than to label love as something that is done in an instant. As we have been discussing, loving is what we do all of the time with our whole being.

While it's true that over time marriage goes through different stages and faces changes, yet passion should be the essential component of love within marriage. Never lose it, because passion is what gives a relationship the unique characteristic that makes it a marriage. Without it, the relationship could be any kind of relationship, but it won't be a marriage (Genesis 2:24).

Love in marriage is expressed in total dedication. A voluntary surrender, with total respect and in complete freedom, seeking the full satisfaction of the other in each encounter, even offering protection against the temptations of Satan (1 Corinthians 7:3-5). A demonstration of tender and passionate love where the goal of one is to satisfy the other. God planned it that way from the beginning.

"Sexuality – and in particular genitality– has to be seen as a necessary, valuable and fundamental component in the marriage relationship. You must constantly work so that this dimension is not lost. The couple has to make it possible to find spaces, situations and possibilities to express their desire and to make it grow."⁷



Activities

Instructions

In your own words, write a summary of the lesson highlighting the main points. Don't use more space than what's provided below.

Leaving... The Beginning of a New Union







• Discover the meaning of the command "to leave" and examine its implications for the life of a newly married couple.



- God commands spouses to leave father and mother, and all other relationships, to focus on building their marriage.
- Even though Genesis was written in the midst of patriarchal times, God made it clear and undeniable that marriage has equal demands on spouses.
- From the beginning, God paid a lot of attention to taking care of the marriage relationship, commanding spouses to live on their own, apart from family and without dependence on others.
- Leaving to join in marriage will always bring growth and blessing.

Introduction

hen we study the Bible we find a God who left nothing to chance. Everything was planned carefully and in detail. God followed an order, in a logical sequence, giving mandates at precise moments, with well defined purpose.

We continue to look at the principles that God established for marriage from the very beginning, principles that will help us establish the solid foundations to build a healthy marriage relationship for life. In this lesson we will examine the principle of "leaving"; a mandate that God established as a fundamental action for the construction of the new relationship.

Leaving ... In Genesis 2:24

Genesis 2:24 is key when marriage is discussed. In a few words everything concerning the achievement of a full marriage relationship is described. The passage becomes central in the treatment of the theme because it's established as the foundation, from the beginning, of the institution of marriage. Jesus Christ, the incarnate God, quotes it in response to a Pharisee's test (Matthew 19:5 and Mark 10:7-8) and later, the apostle Paul quotes it in Ephesians 5:31 to illustrate to his readers the relationship between Christ and the Church. Therefore, Genesis 2:24 is the passage we need to explore to find those foundational principles so that, by living them, marriage will be what God intended.

Leave ('azab) appears 215 times in the Bible and according to Vine's Bible Dictionary it means "to leave, abandon, forsake, renounce, let go," it basically means "to depart from" or "to leave." This is what "leave" means the first time it appears in Genesis 2:24. However, the commentators Wenham¹ and Hamilton² defend the translation of 'azab as "abandon" instead of "leave". "To leave" has a more neutral sound, while "to abandon" suggests finality. So, leaving your father and mother and committing to your wife meant breaking one loyalty and starting another. Before marriage, the man's first obligation was to his parents. After marriage, his obligation becomes his wife. "In traditional societies like Israel, where honoring parents is the highest human obligation along with honoring God, this declaration of abandoning them is alarming."³

So, leaving your father and mother and committing to your wife meant breaking one loyalty and starting another. Before marriage, the man's first obligation was to his parents. After marriage, his obligation becomes his wife.

When consulting the Merriam-Webster Disctionary⁴, we find the word "leave" has the following meanings: to go away from, depart; desert, abandon; to terminate association with; or withdraw from. We see that in English the meaning doesn't differ or deviate from the meaning of the original Hebrew word found in the biblical text.

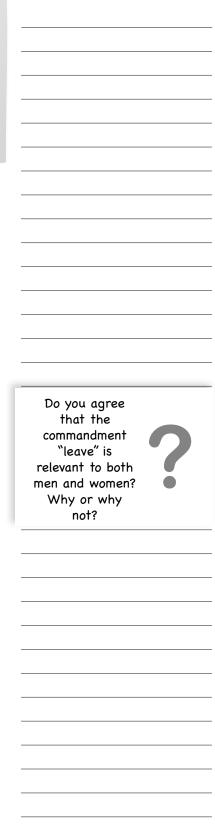
Leaving ... Who Should Leave?

Why does it say the male (ish) will leave ...? Is the command just for him? Is the woman (isha) not commanded to leave as well? It's obvious that the command is relevant to both man and woman. However, the reason only the man is referred to becomes clearer when we understand that the account of creation was written during the patriarchal era, when it was common practice for the woman to leave everything behind and join her husband in his house or in the environment of his parents (see, Genesis 24). In this light, the mandate to leave directed at the man is scandalous; it's a harsh break with the social structure of the times. So now, we can understand that the mandate to leave isn't about another cultural mandate but quite the opposite. If God's intention had been to maintain the patriarchy, the mandate would have been directed at women, but no, it's directed at men. One more proof that marriage is not a social structure but a divine design. It's God himself inspiring the biblical writer to correct the custom of the time and lay the foundation for marriage as God intended it from the beginning. God's original plan begins with letting go; an action that is essential for both men and women in order to establish this new union (Genesis 2:24).

There are two important aspects that the biblical text reveals. One is that the man and woman who are united in marriage are not children but adults. They are mature, free people who are given the opportunity to make their own decisions. And two, is that the mandate was to leave to unite, but to unite with each other: one man and one woman. The children would be the fruit of their loving relationship but never are the spouses to separate and unite with the children. Marriage comes first, children come after. First they are spouses, and then they are parents.

Leaving ... What To Leave?

In Genesis 2:24 the mandate is to leave "father and mother," the first relationship, the most intimate that a person has experienced up



"You should prepare for the day your children leave by cultivating common interests, learning to do things together, and deepening your friendship with each other" says counselor Wayne Mack. Now think for a moment... how long has it been since you and your spouse went out alone...no kids, no relatives, no friends, and they were not part of your conversation? Now, what will you do about it?

to this point (if they follow God's mandate to refrain from premarital sex). Let's remember that humankind is the most dependent of all the creatures that exist on earth. Knowing this, the Creator gave us parents (male and female) to guide, nurture, support, and educate us in all areas of our development. Parents are to guide, teach, and support the development of their children so that they grow into independent people, that parents can then hand over to God (Matthew 1:21; 3:17; Luke 1:57; 3:3). Christian counselor Wayne Mack says, "If you're a parent, your goal should be to prepare your children to leave you, not to stay. Your life should not revolve around them because this will make them emotional invalids. You should prepare for the day your children leave by cultivating common interests, learning to do things together, and deepening your friendship with each other."⁵

Returning to the biblical text, it's clear that those who are going to marry must leave their parents. There is no option. They must leave their parents even when the parents don't want to let them go and devise subtle and convenient strategies to prevent them from leaving. The man and the woman will have to leave what until now has been their priority, their parents, to establish a new priority, their spouse. Parents can do and say whatever they feel and want, but God gives a clear mandate to those who decide to unite in marriage.

The passage speaks of leaving the family of origin. These are the people with whom they have established a very intimate bond for years, but leaving is the condition for starting a new union. Leaving implies "burning the boats."⁶ It's removing the possibility of returning from the mind. It's getting used to the idea of: to leave and never return, under any circumstances.

Because of the strength of the bond emphasized in the verse, it's proper to think that when leaving the family of origin, all other relationships must also be left behind. Yes, all. Extended family, friendships, past romantic relationships, employment, profession or career⁷, hobbies⁸ and even church work. Everything must be placed in the background and, above all, parents must stop having influence over the decisions that the spouses must make to build their marriage, their one and only marriage. This can be very difficult to achieve if, after marriage, they continue to be emotionally dependent on (influenced by) the relationships they had when they were single.

On the other hand, not letting go is an emotional dependency that psychology refers to as "attachment", and it can be as serious as an addiction. The problem is that "many emotionally dependent people do not know that they are emotionally dependent, they are unaware. You will see them suffering, with a false smile from side to side, justifying absurd psychological self-destruction and wallowing in self-deception. But there is no way around it: attachment corrupts; it affects your integrity and makes you weaker every day."⁹

Leaving ... What Exactly Does All This Mean?

Perhaps at this point it becomes necessary to specify exactly what it means to "leave". Firstly, leaving doesn't mean loving less. The love for our parents should not change. Every human being has enough capacity to love everyone they decide to love. What will change is the order of priority. Secondly, it doesn't mean to stop honoring our parents. By building a healthy, strong, solid, permanent marriage relationship without depending on our parents, it will greatly honor them. Thirdly, it doesn't mean severing all connection with them, but it means putting an end to all emotional, economic, etc. dependence on them. And finally, it doesn't necessarily mean a certain amount of physical distance, although it's obvious that there must be adequate distance. At present this is relative considering communication through the Internet has made the world very "small". We can communicate with whoever we want, whenever we want. If a newly married couple moves to a distant country but they remain connected to their parents daily through the Internet, they may feel like they live a long way away, but in reality they haven't left them. The action of leaving means that even if they live in the same city, they must stop depending on their parents for anything.¹⁰

Leaving means that the spouses will reorient their lives towards each other and will concentrate on building their marriage; not a marriage like her parents' marriage and not like his parents' marriage, but a new marriage, their own marriage, taking into account their reality and what satisfies their emotional needs.

Leaving ... Brings Growth And ... Blessing

When the Word of God says to leave, we must understand that it is for our good. Throughout the Bible we see this, in one form or another. In Genesis 12:1 God called Abram and told him to "Go from your country, your people and your father's household..." This was another instance of God giving the command to "leave everything." Abraham obeyed, leaving his parents and traveling far from them, he struggled through different circumstances, grew, and through him all the families of the earth were blessed (Genesis 22:18).

The mandate to spouses is for their own good, strange as it may seem. There are many married couples who after years together can attest that obeying the command to "leave" led them to grow as people, in their marriage relationship, in their dependence on God and they were able to receive and be channels of blessing.

Conclusion

Let's remember that through this new marriage relationship, God will show himself to the world because marriage is the image of God. Therefore, it's extremely important that the individuals leave their parents and all dependencies, so that it's God who guides them and recreates them in their relationship. Just as each human being is unique, each marriage is unique and has the possibility to display the image of God through exercising grace and forgiveness, mercy and love.



Activities

Instructions

After going through this lesson, does it change how you view God's mandate to "leave father and mother" and other relationships to unite in marriage? Explain.

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One Plus One Equals One







• Discover the meaning of the mandate "... and is united ... and they shall become one flesh" and its implications for the new couple's married life.

- Both in the original languages and in English the meaning of "united" and "becoming one" is the same: made one; to act as a single entity.
- Marriage is the act of two unique beings (woman and man) with their particularities and contributing 100% of themselves merge into a single being.
- The biblical understanding of the principle of unity banishes any idea of separation, because within the very unity of a man and a woman in marriage lies the strength to be inseverable.
- "Becoming one" requires dedication, effort, constant learning and daily and continuous commitment over time.

Introduction

any people at some point in life have asked: Where does marriage come from? Who invented it? Is there a cost for its members? What are the benefits? What is it for? What is life together like? Is it relevant for today? All of them, and many more, are legitimate and worthy of being answered. But how do you answer them? Who has the answers? And what's more, who has true answers that bring life and happiness to men and women today?

Without a doubt, we cannot ignore the Word of God when we want to answer fundamental questions like these. The answers will give us principles that, if lived by, will lead us to the full life that our Creator intended from the beginning.

When we approach the biblical text, in Genesis 2:24 we find that it says: "That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh." This is a well-known, key text when talking about marriage. In fact, this is the text which we base marriage on because it contains marriage's past, present and future: the nuclear family (past), the new union (present) and the construction of unity (future).

In this lesson we will look at unity. Unity is an important principle that opposes what is currently lived out in much of society. Unity contradicts the aspects of individuality and self-centeredness. Aspects that were not part of God's original design but that are present today in marital relationships and fight to distance spouses from the full life that God intended for them.

"...'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.' So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate" (Matthew 19:5-6).

The Meaning of Unity

Let's see what the Bible says about the meaning of unity. According to The KJV Old Testament Hebrew Lexicon, the Hebrew word "dabaq" means "to cling, adhere, stay close, cleave, keep close, stick to, stick with, join to." This is where the words "adhesive, glue" as well as the more abstract ideas of "loyalty, devotion, unity" came from. The term appears a little more than 60 times in the Hebrew Old Testament, beginning with Genesis 2:24 (NRSV), "Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and <u>clings</u> to his wife, and they become one flesh." Here it reflects the fundamental use of dabaq, or cling: when an object (or person) adheres to or attaches to another. Along the same lines, Eleazar's hand is said to have "clung" to his sword when he struck down the Philistines (2 Samuel 23:10 NRSV) and Jeremiah's loincloth "clings to" his loins," as a symbol of how Israel should adhere to God (Jeremiah 13:11 NRSV).¹

In Psalm 119:25 (NRSV) the same word, dadaq, appears to describe the despondency of the soul. It literally says "My soul clings to the dust." Other translations say "I am laid low in the dust" (NIV), "I lie defeated in the dust" (Good News Translation), "I am completely discouraged — I lie in the dust" (The Living Bible), "I am about to die" (International Childrens Bible). All these translations give the idea of being in contact with or staying in close physical proximity to.

The figurative use of dadaq as in "loyalty" and "affection" is based on the physical proximity of the people involved, similar to the closeness of a husband to his wife (Genesis 2:24), the affection ("attached" NET) of Shechem for Dinah (Genesis 34:3) or when Ruth "clung" to Naomi (Ruth 1:14). "Holding fast" to God is equivalent to "loving him" (Deuteronomy 30:20).²

The verse from Genesis that we are studying appears three times in the New Testament, and every time the Greek word "kolláo" ($\kappa o \lambda \Delta \omega$) is used. It means "to unite, to join firmly."³ In Matthew 19:5, Mark 10:7-8 and Ephesians 5:31, "a man will ... and be united to his wife." Interestingly, it is the same word that the apostle Paul uses repeatedly. In 1 Corinthians 6:16 he says, "Do you not know that he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her in body? For it is said, 'The two will become one flesh.'" He also uses it in the next verse to point to an intimate relationship with God. And in 1 Corinthians 7:10, Paul refers to the permanence of the marriage union and gives a mandate from the Lord saying: "To the married I give this command (not I, but the Lord): A wife must not separate from her husband".

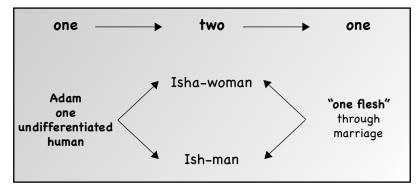
In English, the verb "unite" has the following meanings: "to put together to form a single unit; to cause to adhere; to link by a legal or moral bond; to possess (different things, such as qualities) in combination; to become one or as if one; to become combined by or as if by adhesion or mixture; to act in concert."⁴

As for "unity," the Dictionary of the Royal Spanish Academy provides a meaning that makes it even more interesting when applied to marriage. It says: "Property of every being, by virtue of which it cannot be divided without its essence being destroyed or altered."⁵ This refers to a strong and permanent unit that was never intended to be separated, just as God designed marriage. The expression "one flesh" found in Genesis 2:24 allows us to see the idea that just as the human being is a whole, and cannot be divided into pieces and continue to be a unit, God used the same concept with the marriage relationship. The married couple is no longer two individuals (a man and a woman), they are now one, a new unit (marriage).

An adequate understanding of the principle of unity will remove any idea of separation from our thinking, because in the unity of man and woman in marriage is the strength to be indissoluble.

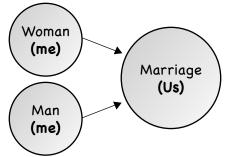
The Unity of God: One + One

In God's math, one plus one is one. Clearly God establishes that each being is created unique and can't be duplicated (Genesis 1:27), but in order to establish marriage according to God's plan, each spouse must leave their family of origin and unite (merge) with the other to become "one flesh" (Genesis 2:24). "Genesis 1-2 paints a picture of human creation that simply begins with the human being (adam), whom God differentiates into woman (isha) and man (ish) and then reunites into one flesh, the marriage couple."⁶



Graphic taken from *Making a Marriage:* Chapter 1 – A Biblical Perspective of Marriage by Roger L. Hahn⁷

Does this mean that each person suffers from depersonalization? Not at all. Each spouse (the woman and the man) will continue to be themselves, with their gender characteristics and their personality. It would be a contradiction to think that in marriage each individual would lose the uniqueness and individuality that they were created with. Our Creator planned for marriage to be a whole rather than the sum of its parts, where each of the parties (the woman and the man) contribute 100% of themselves to build a new 100% unit (marriage). We can illustrate it like this:



Understanding that every graphic or illustration has its limitations, here we see how two totally separate individuals (female and male)who are centered on themselves (me) when united in marriage become the marriage relationship (us) that includes, strengthens and fulfills them.

When the biblical text tells us that uniting means to adhere, join,

merge and portray ideas that have to do with loyalty, devotion and love, it's giving us valuable information to put into practice. Of course this requires a change of approach. The apostle Paul put it in very comprehensive terms when he wrote, "The wife does not have authority over her own body but yields it to her husband. In the same way, the husband does not have authority over his own body but yields it to his wife" (1 Corinthians 7:4). He's more than explicit about the care and attention that each person should have towards the other. It's no longer about me, it's about my spouse; it's not about me, it's about us.

The natural tendency is to think about myself and do what makes me feel good instead of considering what my spouse needs. This selfcenteredness is what ends many marriages. The original model requires breaking with self-centeredness, it calls us out of ourselves and towards the other person, to cultivate interdependence and coexistence; that each spouse thinks about the needs of the other and how to meet them.

Total Unity!

"Man ... is united to his wife, and they become one flesh" (NIV), "He marries a woman, and the two of them become like one person" (CEV), "In this way two people become one" (ERV), "...the two become one person" (TLB), "...and the two will become one body" (NCV). The different translations provide different terms (flesh, one, person, body) but they all carry the same idea, which points to total unity. Nothing in the biblical text tells us that it's only about sexual unity. On the contrary, it's a unity that affects all dimensions of the person. "The monstrosity of sexual intercourse outside of marriage is that those who indulge in it are trying to isolate one kind of union (the sexual) from all the other kinds of union which were intended to go along with it and make up the total union."⁸

After celebrating the first marriage, God blessed them and said to the spouses: "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over Make a list (at least 6) of practical and daily aspects where the marriage unit should be reflected.

Do you agree that many enter marriage with sexual damage that prevents them from having a satisfactory relationship like God planned? every living creature that moves on the ground.' Then God said, 'I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food. And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds in the sky and all the creatures that move along the ground—everything that has the breath of life in it—I give every green plant for food.' And it was so. God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the sixth day" (Genesis 1:28-31). What a powerful message this first marriage received from the mouth of God Himself!

It's interesting to note that the first command God gave to the newlyweds was have sex! In contrast, many today, amazingly enough, cannot associate God with sex. This is understandable, since sex is one of the areas that the enemy has used and continues to use to cause the most damage. Because of this, many come to marriage with damage and deep wounds that serve as obstacles to becoming one in the marriage, sexually and in other areas. God, in creating sex, clearly revealed how sacred it is and constantly calls us to sanctify sex. How? By enjoying it fully in the context of marriage, without making it an idol, central and unique in the marriage relationship. In this sense we must radically change our approach, since sex is an opportunity to serve our spouse. It's not about obtaining pleasure but fundamentally giving pleasure to each other. "The sex drive literally calls us out of ourselves and into another. ... As we are called out of ourselves, we nurture interdependence and fellowship, two very valuable Christian practices."⁹

The second command that God gave to the newlyweds was to administer what was created. Basically we can say that he gave them a common task, a unifying element. He wasn't worried about how they accomplished the task, that was precisely what would make them one: a common project. The "how" would be determined by them (the woman and the man) and based on their gifts and abilities through a committed relationship and clear communication. Something that together they would dream about, plan, discuss, negotiate, reach agreements, evaluate, make changes, make mistakes, learn and start over. A lot of marriages today pretend to build their relationship without any shared tasks, without goals and objectives for which they can work together. Watch out! As we have already seen, children are not the exclusive reason for marriage, therefore children should not be considered as the common project in marriage. The project that will lead them to be one will be the construction of the marriage relationship itself. The children may or may not come, and if they do, they will be short-term projects, so the spouses' must surpass the years that raising children occupies.

We have known married couples whose common project (perhaps unconsciously and influenced by their background) was to raise their children, and when the last child married and left home, they divorced. They got the focus wrong. They thought that they were tasked to reproduce and raise a family without enjoying the pleasure, personal

One Plus One Equals One

fulfillment and satisfaction of being spouses. Nothing is further from reality. God planned for married couples to have a full life, that at each stage of life together would be enjoyed, including the limited time with their children.

Understanding the task ahead of us is a unifying project is important because it will help us to fully enjoy every moment of married life.

Unity Implies Work!

"They got married and lived happily ever-after." Many of us know stories and novels that end with "happily ever-after". Of course we are talking about stories and novels that have nothing to do with real life.

Something that we normally see in brides and grooms getting married is a very large expenditure of time and energy for the wedding and all that it entails without thinking too much about the future. And we don't mean the future in terms of what material things they can get. Too often we overlook the fact that at the altar or after the honeymoon, life together begins, not ends. This new beginning is a life that is the responsibility of both of them and that will require a big investment in every aspect from each one of them.

When we read in Genesis 2:24 "...and is united..., and they become one flesh," we are reading about marriage itself. Being one flesh or one person, as the Living Bible translates, is not achieved at the altar after the pastoral declaration: "I pronounce you husband and wife." The spouses have simply committed to dedicate themselves to building a marriage. We must understand it as the most intimate relationship that a man and a woman can experience. A relationship that illustrates the relationship between Christ and the Church (Ephesians 5:22-32). We're not talking about the material things that the couple can achieve, but about the marriage relationship itself. Isn't it true that many of us spend the most time, effort, and even money on anything but building and strengthening our marriage?

There are marriages that seem to go against the model God designed when a dating couple does the impossible and builds a strong relationship before they get married, and it seems nothing is beyond them. But immediately after they get married everything else begins to come first. Of course, there is a "justification" for each thing that comes before their relationship but it's still an excuse, because nothing (not even children) can take priority over the relationship between spouses. For each spouse, the other spouse must be the priority.

Building a healthy bond takes work. Why do we use the word "work"? Because it's an intentional action, that requires dedication and effort, constant learning and daily commitment to the relationship. You can't drop your guard, it's a sustained effort over time. Taking advantage of all circumstances, even the unpleasant ones, however adverse they may be, is the way to learn and grow in the relationship with our spouse.

How a married couple carries out a common task is determined by them (the woman and the man) based on their gifts and abilities within a committed relationship and with clear communication. How does this work in your context?



Activities

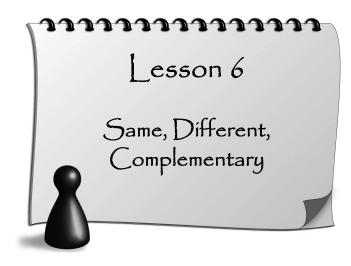
Instructions

After what you've studied, do you think that unity is a fundamental and relevant principle for marriage today? State at least three reasons and justify them.



Same, Dífferent, Complementary







- Approach a proper understanding of equality between men and women as human beings created by God.
- Have a clear knowledge that the differences between men and women were not made to divide them but to empower them by complementing each other.



- God created man and woman in his image and likeness as complete persons in themselves.
- Man and woman were created by God exactly the same and absolutely different in many aspects, but perfectly complementary to fulfill God's mission.
- When a man and woman live lives that complement each other, their marriage will display God's image.

Introduction

erhaps you have heard phrases like: "I am looking for my better half"1 or "Where's your better half?" or "I've found my better half!" These are phrases of purely philosophical origin that have nothing to do with the Bible and that, despite being very popular, are far from what God planned when creating humankind (female and male). This very popular expression implies that each person is incomplete until they find their "better half" that will complete them; as incomplete beings, they will never be able to fulfill themselves and that it's urgent for them to find their other half to "finally" be complete!

> We are created by God as beings that are unique and irreplaceable, equal and at the same time different, complete within ourselves to live in a complementary relationship with others.

By studying the creation of humankind in Genesis, from 1:26 to 2:25, we understand that all people were created by God as unique and irreplaceable beings, equal and at the same time different, complete within themselves to live in a complementary relationship with others. From there, we can affirm that marriage is a mutual project that requires total interdependence on the part of the two complete human beings (male and female) that comprise it. This marriage project, to be fully realized, requires companionship instead of individualism, agreement in the midst of differences, and cooperation instead of competition.

Same, different, complementary, three words that define the human being (male and female) created by God, and three concepts that are not very easy to practice in the context of marriage. Let's take a detailed look at each of these words from a biblical perspective.

Same

Creating the human being was God's idea, that they were women and men too, just as they were in his image. The woman and the man were created by God and both received the breath of life (Genesis 2:7). Some translations of the account of the creation of the woman in Genesis 2 may give the idea that the woman was "created" from the male. But a closer look at the biblical text helps us to see that this was not the case.

Genesis 1:26-28 relates the creation of humankind, male and female. In Genesis 2:21-22 we have a more specific account, and in it we see that God made, literally constructed, the woman from the man's side.² Thus, we see that both male and female came from the same source and shared the same flesh made from the dust of the earth to which God gave life by breathing into him (Genesis 2:7). When we read Genesis 2:23, we find an exclamation from Adam that helps us understand from what the woman was created. Adam exclaims, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh;..." This is a clear indication that the woman was formed from the whole side (bones and flesh). And Adam's expression was one of excitement and immense joy at meeting another human being; an equal, with self-value, free, independent and responsible. He saw someone with whom to relate and unite as "one" with, in a relationship of interdependence, as equal human beings.

Equal in Humanity. Men and women are equal in their fundamental nature. Before being a woman and a man, they are human beings (Genesis 1:26-27; 5:1-2). This is a fundamental aspect to consider in human relationships; something that's not a small thing if we take into account the great gender discrimination that many suffer today in all spheres of society where human rights are not respected, starting with the right to be treated as human beings, regardless of gender. This is more prevalent than we think within the marriage relationship. It's something that's so embedded in us that we don't notice it as a discriminatory attitude that goes against God's idea in creating us. This is revealed by a study in which researchers Dahl and Moretti suggest that "the age-old favoring of boys is not confined to the past or to developing countries. It is subtle and less widespread than it once was in the United States, but it is still significant today." (pg.36) In the United States, for example, "men express an overwhelming preference for a son (19% say "girl" and 48% say "boy," based on a Comment on the following statement: "Man and woman were created by God and both received the breath of life." (See Genesis 2:7)

sample of 962 respondents)". (pg. 29) After comparing this data with that of 16 other randomly chosen countries, the researchers confirmed this trend in most of them, only in Spain, Lithuania and Iceland did they find evidence contrary to this trend". (pg. 70)³

Equal in Dignity. This is nothing more than the value that each person has. By divine design no human being has more value than another human being. God didn't make any other creation in his image and likeness nor did he "breathe into his nostrils the breath of life" (Genesis 2:7), into anything he made except for man. Therefore, every human being alike is sacred. Therefore, no gender (male or female), in any context, including marriage, can subjugate or be subject to the other, thus undermining their dignity.

We must be aware that in many countries there is a patriarchal and macho culture, which maintain many teachings from the past, such as those of Saint Augustine, who is known as one of the fathers of the church. He considered women to be inferior beings that were not a creation of God and were not created in his image and likeness. This position was held by many and continued until the Middle Ages. Many held that only man was made in the image of God, and that to say otherwise was absurd. St. Augustine said that it corresponds both to "Justice and to the Natural Order of humanity that women serve

men." The right order is yielded to only when the man commands and the woman obeys. It may seem like a totally absurd statement for our time, but unfortunately not everyone feels that way. Domestic violence in all its forms and the rate of femicides today show that the dignity of human beings is still closely related to gender.⁵

Official information for 18 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean shows a total of 4264 women were victims of femicide in 2020. This means that 178 women are murdered every 24 hours.⁴

Equal in Rights and Responsibilities. All human beings, women and men, are deserving of equal rights and responsibilities. The biblical text concerning creation doesn't mention differences in this sense. It doesn't speak of hierarchies, authority or dominance of one human being over another. It does clearly show that in the face of the assigned task, both man and woman had to obey, ruling (managing, taking care of) creation; never and under no circumstances does God refer to ruling over one another or other human beings (Genesis 1:28–30). Male and female were made co-administrators of the entire task entrusted to them. This clearly speaks of a marriage in which spouses will freely exercise the same rights and responsibilities in life. This speaks of the same rights, for example, to study, work, fulfill their dreams, develop as people, and feel satisfaction with life. It also speaks to us of the same rights to participate in decision-making, free of pressure and conditions. It speaks to us of equality to even share domestic chores. In many cases, social structures have led to the association of tasks with genders, going so far as to consider them as if they were some divine mandate. In marriage, both the man and the woman are equally responsible for the children; to provide security, love, economic support and a favorable environment for their proper growth. "For children, the most important people in the world are not political leaders or directors of development agencies, but their fathers and mothers, who make fundamental decisions every day, such as sharing responsibility for household chores and child care. Gender equality is essential to create the world envisioned in the Millenium Declaration, approved by the United Nations."⁶

Division, separation and classification are attitudes that are natural in our human interaction, and the first person that we practice them on is our spouse. We get many of these attitudes from our environment, society, culture and systems that govern us. But within marriage, in the fundamental nucleus created by God, we must oppose these attitudes by validating the intentions of the Creator when he made us all the same.

Dífferent

We're different, very different! That's what we think when we talk about men and women. And it's true, on one hand we're the same, but on the other, different. Although, there are studies that show that there are more psychological differences found between people of the same sex than between men and women in general terms. This just shows how complex we are as human beings and how little we know about the human as a whole being. The advancement of science and applied technology, including neurology, has provided us with new information and shed light on this subject, but there's still a long way to go to fully understand the human being.

Every day science is more confident in working with interdisciplinary models or approaches to study the human being. It's said, for example, that the human being is a biopsychosocial being, which means that there are various components that interact in the development of a human being's life. On one hand is everything related to biology as a living organism (genetics, nutrition, rest, etc.); On the other hand is everything that has to do with mental activity (formation of the psyche, traumas, etc.) and everything related to interaction with other human beings and the environment in which it operates.

Beginning with creation, God created human beings to be different, "... male and female he created them," says Genesis 1:27. From the beginning, one obvious difference was that God made sexual (heterosexual) beings, which established physical differences. But these are not just genital differences, physical differences regarding the whole being. With the purpose to individualize medicine and



obtain better results, the National Institute of Health (United States) is dedicating itself to studying these differences in men and women. Neuropsychiatrist Louann Brazendine says that all the cells in the female body are female and all the cells in the male body are male, and that the kidneys, the heart and the brain are equivalent to each one.⁷ Science confirms the fundamental difference that God established in creation: "...male and female he created them" (Genesis 1:27).

Not only can this difference be verified physically, there are other aspects that also confirm it. Helen M. Alvaré and George Mason say that there are now many books and articles presenting the results of decades of scientific research on "the existence of differences between men and women in everything from spatial perception to problem-solving techniques, context perception, memory patterns and rest cycles..." The authors look for the origins of such differences in sources as diverse as evolution, biological structure, genes, hormone activity (from conception to death) and family and social conditioning.⁸

Definitely, we are the same, but we are also different. Women tend to be more auditory, which is why they need to hear expressions of endearment; men tend to be more visual, so they need to see before they can hear. Women tend to express their feelings and men tend to keep their feelings to themselves. When faced with conflict, women tend to need to put their feelings and thoughts into words, that's why they talk with their spouse, mother, friend or neighbor; while men tend to talk with whomever can give him a solution or he waits to talk when the conflict has been resolved, meanwhile prefering to remain silent. We see this big difference because in telling others about the problem, the woman heals, liberates herself, and resolves the conflict; while the man, due to his need for admiration, waits to tell others about the resolution. In short, men tend to communicate the actions and women tend to communicate the feelings.

Men live to meet goals while women live to go through the process. This is very clear in sex, where there are three very marked moments that make up the whole of the relationship: a before, a during and an after. While women give more importance to before and after the sexual act, men are more focused on during (almost exclusively on penetration and ejaculation or orgasm). This is because men are more in touch with their physical need, sex, while women are more in touch with their emotional need, how they feel. When both needs come together, the man and the woman fully enjoy sex in their relationship.

Men and women present "design" differences that are important to highlight and take into account, because knowing them will help us understand ourselves and our spouse better. Differences can be resolved when men and women live the way that God ordained.

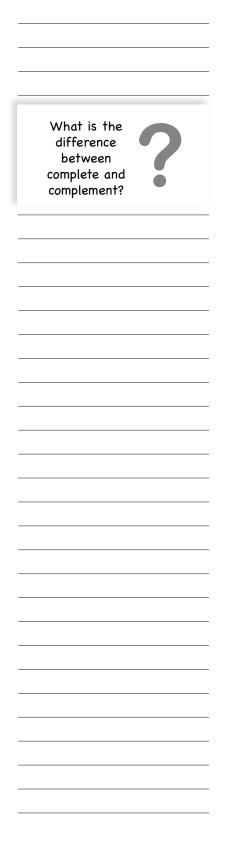
Complementary

As we begin to develop this concept, it is important to make clear and repeat the fact that we are whole beings. Every human being created by God is given all the abilities necessary in order to become himself.

As a general rule, we say that we complement each other but in reality the idea (consciously or not) is that we complete each other. Completing one another is an idea that, as we have already seen, doesn't come from the Bible but from Greek mythology, and is socially conveyed to the point that it's almost held as truth. Contrary to this thinking, what the biblical text of creation proposes to us is complementarity. We understand complementarity as an association in which each of the parts (complete in themselves) forms a complement, completing the whole, making it perfect. Perhaps we should remember here that marriage was created in the image of God. Seeing God in his perfect unity, we discover a perfect complementarity between the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Each one is complete in itself complementing the whole.

In the creation of man and woman in Genesis 1:27, it is striking that after the blessing, God entrusted both of them to "increase in number." This is God's call to full complementarity from every point of view, beginning with the means established by God for procreation, the sexual relationship, and continuing with the responsibility in the upbringing and development of their children. Marriage is a totally complementary activity. As much as human beings have sought artificial methods for reproduction, they always need the participation of a man and a woman. The complementarity between women and men was God's plan from the beginning and continues to be. This is confirmed by the worldwide statistics that, as the Creator planned in the beginning, show there are 50.4% men and 49.6% women⁹, a percentage that is maintained over time ratifying what God wants. On the other hand, the same call for complementarity is evident in the second task that they were given: "... fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground" (Genesis 1:28). The man and the woman, the woman and the man were made co-administrators, by God, without establishing hierarchies among them or giving any indications of how to carry out the task. Therefore, the first couple had to agree and through complementarity carry out the mandate. This complementarity was based on their skills and gifts, taking into account their abilities and aptitudes for the different tasks they had to perform in order to fulfill what was commissioned by God.

In the biblical text that refers to creation in Genesis 2, we find a more detailed description of the creation of humankind (male and female), and it's here where complementarity is seen as a key principle that God intended for married life.



Genesis 2:5 says: "and there was no man¹⁰ (adam) to cultivate the ground" (NASB). It goes on to say, "Then the Lord God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being" Genesis 2:7. Later, God placed the man (adam) as his steward in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 2:15). "A key step in the plot comes in Genesis 2:18 when the Lord God said: 'It is not good for human (adam) to be alone. I will make a helper corresponding to the human (adam).' Up to this point there has been no mention of male or female. It is the human being who is created from the ground and given the task of caring for the ground. It is the human being who should not be alone and for whom God will make a helper, or the female who is alone and needs a helper. It is the human person – any human person – who is alone and needs a helper. And God promises to make such a helper for the lonely and needy human being."

The word translated as "help" in Genesis 2:18 is the Hebrew word "ezer" and means "he or she who saves," "he or she who rescues," "he or she who helps." It comes from two Hebrew roots that mean "power," "strength," "resilient." This same word "ezer" appears 21 times in the Old Testament and in 17 of them it refers to God helping his people (Exodus 18:4; Deuteronomy 33:7, 26, 29; 1 Samuel 7:12; Psalm 20:2; 33:20; 70:5; 115:9-11; 121:1-2; 124:8; 146:5; Isaiah 30:5; Daniel 11:34 and Hosea 13:9), being their "ezer." In all cases where the word "ezer" is used, the one giving the help is superior to the one receiving it. In neither of the two occasions in which the word "ezer" is used in creation does it imply "servitude", "inferiority" or "subordination" of the woman toward the man. The hierarchical relationship of subordination of women to men was not God's purpose. That is the product of sin (Genesis 3:16). Patriarchy is a structure of sin.

The word translated as "suitable," "adequate," "corresponding," is the Hebrew word "kenegdô." In Genesis 2:18 it appears to qualify the help that God promises for the human being (adam). The word "kenegdô" comes from the root "neged" which means "in front of," "in sight of," or "opposite to." We can say that it's like the load-bearing wall in a structure; the wall carries much of the weight and is a supporting wall in the building. It is a wall with the same characteristics as its opposite because it will be the counterpart to support the entire construction. So, God promised the human being (adam) a strong, powerful and resilient helper, who will be corresponding to, in front of him, and beside him to help carry out his mission.

In the original design, God gave humankind (male and female) a helper with a key role. They would be help, assistance, salvation and even opposition when the human being wanted to disobey God. Let's remember that God was the "ezer" for his people in the Old Testament, and He's the "ezer" for all humankind today. Definitely we see that God created the relationship to be complementarity between a woman and a man, equal and different at the same time, where there is no dependency or submission between genders. The relationship of domination and submission between human beings was a consequence of sin (Genesis 3:16) and never part of God's plan.

Each spouse is called to go beyond themselves to meet the other and together dream, plan, decide and do based on common goals. Marriage

is a relationship that is built by two, with equal contribution from both. It's about two people who were alone and who could have continued that way, but decided to embark on a path together, which demands that they stop thinking individually and work together.

Each spouse is called to go beyond themselves to meet the other and together dream, plan, decide and do based on common goals.

By complementing each other, men and women empower each other and will be much more than they could be individually. In this complementary relationship, the abilities of each one are enhanced and difficulties are overcome. Each one will contribute a different view that someone of the same gender will not be able to obtain. Complementarity doesn't annul singularity, but from it each spouse will contribute their own perspectives because men and women have different worldviews. "This means that, in some way, we are the image of God in the complementarity of the sexes. As a man and as a woman, we make visible the invisible mystery of God."¹²

Conclusion

Men and women are exactly the same, absolutely different and perfectly complementary. Everything was thought out, planned and created by God.

As for the differences between men and women, there is still a lot to learn despite the important discoveries that have already been made. However, today, science says that men and women are different but complementary. This conclusion confirms what the Word of God says.



Activities

Instructions

Discuss with the other participants how to put God's principles for marriage into practice. Write your conclusions.

Until Death Do Us Part







• Understand that in God's original design the lifelong principle is key to the marriage relationship.



- Marriage, as God designed it, is to be happy and for life.
- By living the lifelong principle, we give security and confidence to our spouse and stability to the family.
- The lifelong principle leads to a commitment to learn the art of coexistence.
- The commitment to stay married until death is a fundamental principle of marriage.

Introduction

Some time ago we bought a USB stick and one day when we went to use it, it stopped working. The memory stick was supposedly of "good quality" and even had a lifetime guarantee, so we never thought it would stop working so soon. A young man who was with us asked us how long ago we had bought it? A little over a year, we told him. To which, quite naturally, he replied, "And how much longer did you want it to last?" It stumped us.

We live in a reality in which "everything" is disposable, just for the moment, for immediate satisfaction, quickly, without thinking about it and for right now. The idea of using and discarding is embedded in the daily lives of people today. Using and discarding are typical features of the postmodern time in which we live, where absolutes have no place and are thought of even less if they come from the God of the Bible. Perhaps we should ask ourselves if this should be so. Is it okay that this way of "living" affects everything, even relationships?

If we look at marriages, we see a very similar reality. On one hand, marriages are decreasing and divorces increasing¹; and on the other hand, couples cohabitating has increased without going through the law or much less through the church. There is definitely an escapist tendency towards the commitment to stay in a marriage relationship, and the unconscious idea that marriage doesn't work. Endless reasons are argued to put an end to marriages and seek new alternatives for cohabitation. Many have already adopted the idea that there is no such thing as a "happy marriage" and there's no way that marriage is for life. Marriage is simply for "as long as it lasts." It's shocking how much of this is permeating the Lord's church and for some time now it has been introduced into the lives of church members as part of Christian thought.

But once again, when we go to the Bible, we find that when God designed marriage He had a different intention. He designed marriage to be for life, as long as both spouses are in this world. Yes! Until death do us part.

Staying: God's |dea

Once again we need to go to the origin of everything. In Genesis 2:24, the central passage as far as marriage is concerned, we find a beginning without an end. The passage tells us about beginning and permanence. Nothing indicates that the relationship of man and woman would be temporary. Had this been the case, God would not have given such a mandate to the newly established and blessed couple (Genesis 1:28-30). God planned marriage to be forever, there was no thought of possibly breaking what had been united, which is a fundamental element in the marriage relationship. Marriage is a relationship built on the lifelong principle.

The Spirit led the biblical writer to use the Hebrew verb "dabaq" to indicate the kind of unity that man and woman were to have in the marriage relationship. It was no accident. It was intentional. The verb "dabaq" means: stick or adhere to, stay together, stand firm, continue firmly, persevere in. All its meanings tell us to stay, to continue what has been started or to start in order to finish.

The New Living Translation (NLT) says: "and the two are united into one." The word unite or merge helps us understand more exactly the meaning of the Hebrew word "dabaq." Merge is perhaps the closest thing to the idea that the writer of Genesis wanted to communicate. It implies that each spouse will give themselves completely to an intimate relationship like no other (1 Corinthians 7:4). This is the same as saying that each spouse will give themselves, consecrate themselves, set themselves apart, give themselves up and reserve themselves totally for and to the other person for long as they live. This is a relationship that from the divine perspective will involve exclusivity, loyalty, commitment, time, dedication, hard work, sacrifice, self-denial ... and much more (1 Corinthians 7:32-34). Sometimes we hear that marriage is a 50% - 50% venture. At no point does this passage give that idea. The reality that God confronts us with is radically different. Marriage requires 100% commitment from each spouse to remain in the relationship to the end.

Can you identify another biblical passage where the lifelong principle is found? After finding it, comment on the passage. Marriage is the space created to be what God wants the members of it to be. This means that, in a permanent, lifelong relationship, they will help each other to develop their full potential throughout their lives together. The marriage relationship is the space where spouses help each other achieve holiness (Proverbs 27:17).

The lifelong principle, which God molded into marriage, can be seen from Genesis throughout the Bible. King Solomon, in his collection of Proverbs, included this issue in chapter 5 when he said, "May your fountain be blessed, and may you rejoice in the wife of your youth. A loving doe, a graceful deer—may her breasts satisfy you always, may you ever be intoxicated with her love. Why, my son, be intoxicated with another man's wife? Why embrace the bosom of a wayward woman?"

The biblical writer definitely made explicit reference to a lifelong relationship of permanence. Through this proverb, Solomon reminds his son of the commitment he made when he was young. He also indicates that the passage of time does not have to affect the relationship and that active permanence must be constant. Hence, he calls him to total participation in the relationship, when he says: "Let her affection fill you at all times with delight, be infatuated always with her love" (Proverbs 5:19b RSV). The lifelong commitment translates into sharing everything, at all times.

Along the same lines, the prophet Malachi warned his contemporaries and drew their attention to the importance of living the lifelong principle. The prophet said: "... the Lord witnessed the vows you and your wife made when you were young. But you have been unfaithful to her, though she remained your faithful partner, the wife of your marriage vows. Didn't the Lord make you one with your wife? In body and spirit you are his. And what does he want? Godly children from your union. So guard your heart; remain loyal to the wife of your youth" (Malachi 2:14-16 NLT). Again we find a direct reference to marriage vows and the breaking of those vows. Malachi makes mention of the creation event from Genesis 2:24 when he says, "Didn't the Lord make you one with your wife? In body and spirit you are his." In this way, the prophet of God makes his listeners return to the basis on which they

are called to live: two lives united as one — a basis that includes the physical but also the intellectual, spiritual, emotional and social, all areas of life. Malachi basically calls his listeners to remain in their marriage relationships, and makes it clear that God hates those who don't.

"So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate." Matthew 19:6

When we look at the New Testament, we see that God continues to insist on the same idea that he had during creation. In the three passages (Matthew 19:5 and Mark 10:7–8 and Ephesians 5:31) in which Genesis 2:24 is mentioned, the Greek word "kolláo" is used, which means "to glue, fasten together, join one's self to." The idea here is a profound unity, having lifelong permanence as a fundamental principle. The word "kolláo" indicates such a strong adhesion between two things that their separation would be impossible without mutual damage.

In the passages from Matthew and Mark, the Pharisees ask a question to test Jesus, and when he answered, he referred them to creation and to the Creator's purpose. We could say that the issue that the Pharisees put on the table was the possibility of not having to remain in a marriage relationship. Those Pharisees were looking for a license from Jesus to continue a practice that, at the time, had been completely distorted. It was then that Jesus emphatically told them: "So they are no longer two, but one flesh; therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate" (Matthew 19:6; Mark 10:8-9). Jesus gave them a masterful closing in which he put an end to the matter. In other words, Jesus made it clear that marriage is a committed relationship between a man and a woman where the lifelong principle is mandated.

When the apostle Paul, in Ephesians 5:31, quoted the passage from Genesis 2:24, he also used the word "kolláo" and he did so keeping with the idea of unity that requires lifelong commitment. The apostle used the image of Christ and the church as a mystery to refer to the lifelong unity of man and woman in marriage. Let's remember that marriage is what God intended from the beginning, and Paul uses Christ and the church as an example to the Ephesians so they will see the dimension of that unity and of the required lifelong commitment. "This is a discovery that the couple can make, either at the beginning, midway or end, depending on the process of internalizing the Christian message. Because it's the way of living the Christian faith that will make them, understanding better every day the meaning of being a Christian couple, insert themselves more deeply into the source and model of the spousal covenant that is the union of Christ with the church, and thus can signify (express) more experientially this mystery."²

The Lifelong Principle

This is a fundamental principle. Getting married is easy to do, the real challenge is staying married despite the different situations that a couple will have to live through. This principle is like a common thread that runs throughout married life. The lifelong principle is the daily representation of the commitment that was made when the couple united in marriage.

The lifelong principle leads us to develop a commitment to learn the art of coexistence. It's not about a static, passive commitment — quite the opposite. The lifelong commitment that God planned for marriage is a commitment that develops a proactive attitude, a constant search for improvements. It is an attitude that prioritizes the marriage relationship over all other relationships and intentionally spends time working on

The lifelong principle leads us to develop a commitment to learn the art of coexistence. What does this mean to you? the relationship itself. Marriage is a commitment that's not subject to selfish conditions on the part of either spouse, but a commitment to remain no matter what and one that finds its purpose in giving security and confidence to the other spouse: "I will always be by your side."

Staying in the Marriage Relationship

Both the man and the woman are together and committed to building the relationship called marriage. Let's remember that one day, they chose each other and left their respective families and other relationships, to unite with each other and become one flesh (Genesis 2:24). That assumed commitment places them with the responsibility of fulfilling their lifelong promise to stay with one another. "We" is first of all.

It's not about staying in the same house or staying for the children, or for something else, but staying for the marriage relationship and only for it. We have already mentioned repeatedly that the marriage relationship comes first and that nothing and no one should change

For the man, his priority will be to remain for and with his wife, and for the woman, her priority will be to remain for and with her husband, at all times and for as long as they both live.

that priority. For the man, his priority will be to remain for and with his wife, and for the woman, her priority will be to remain for and with her husband, at all times and for as long as they both live.

There are married couples who remain living under the same roof but are far away from each other, without making their spouse and their marriage relationship a real priority in their lives, as if staying under the same roof was enough. Likewise, we find unfocused marriages, where both the man and the woman are more attached to their children than to their spouse. After a few years of divorce, a woman told her story, saying: "I wouldn't have minded if he wasn't a good husband, but the problem was that he was an absent father." The mis-focus of this couple was such that if the two had continued to be "married to their children," they would have "remained" in an apparent marriage relationship, like so many we see today. Putting children first is such a common problem these days that it seems strange to prioritize the marriage relationship over parenthood. Among the things that blogger Sloane Bradshaw learned after her divorce was that the marriage relationship is for two and requires priority and work without letting anything or anyone get in the way. Bradshaw says: "I put my kids first...we were never alone together, and we never had date nights without kids."³

Marriage is "on Earth"

Marriage is a plan created in heaven to be lived out on earth. On repeated occasions, on the lips of lovers, in song lyrics and poems, commitments are spoken of loving throughout eternity! Those phrases

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make it sound as if the love between husband and wife transcends this life.

Jesus made it clear that in the resurrection there will be no marriage. In the Gospel of Matthew when the "At the resurrection people will neither marry nor be given in marriage; they will be like the angels in heaven." Matthew 22:30.

Sadducees asked Jesus about this issue, He was very blunt: "When God raises people to life, they won't marry." (Matthew 22:30 CEV).

In the letter he wrote to the Romans, the Apostle Paul used the analogy of marriage to explain slavery to sin, the Spirit and the law. He says: "Do you not know, brothers and sisters—for I am speaking to those who know the law—that the law has authority over someone only as long as that person lives? For example, by law a married woman is bound to her husband as long as he is alive, but if her husband dies, she is released from the law that binds her to him. So then, if she has sexual relations with another man while her husband is still alive, she is called an adulteress. But if her husband dies, she is released from that law and is not an adulteress if she marries another man" (Romans 7:1-3). The apostle is clarifying that with physical death the obligations to the law cease. In the same way, when one spouse dies, the other is released and they can marry again without any hindrance (Romans 7:3).

Staying - As Long As They Both Shall Live!

"...what God has joined together, let no one separate" (Matthew 19:6). The marriage union was designed by God to last throughout the earthly life. Unfortunately, sin has wreaked havoc in people's lives and therefore, when they join in marriage, many bring their preconceived concepts, patterns, ideas and expectations to the relationship and if they are not accepted, understood or tolerated by the other person, they end up wearing down the relationship and bringing an end to it. However, God wants married couples to learn to accept each other and work with respect through their differences and disagreements. God doesn't ask anyone to remain in a relationship where their safety and physical integrity may be in danger, but he does not expect the decision to end a relationship, that could be improved with dedication and effort, to be taken lightly.

Marriage implies a commitment, on the part of the spouses, to the end. Marriage emergency exits, such as those in buildings, should not be designed for use in the event of a fire. If there are, it will be difficult not to give in to the temptation to use them. In married life there will be situations in which it will be easier to lower your arms and abandon the situation rather than stay and face it. Therefore, the commitment to stay until the end, for all life long, becomes a fundamental principle in marriage.





Activities

Instructions

In your own words explain the lifelong principle. Make it a lesson to share at a marriage gathering. Give examples, use activities, etc.

Restoration Of the Original Model







- See the model of marriage that God created as the model to be restored.
- Discover the damage that sin produced in humankind (male and female) which fundamentally affected the marriage created by God.
- Recognize that the redemption achieved by Christ on the cross reaches marriages and his Spirit is sufficient to restore God's original model that we can live out today.



- Marriage was God's plan, executed with love for the blessing of humankind (male and female).
- The enemy of God fundamentally damaged marriage and its effects continue to this day.
- The model of marriage that God created hasn't changed, so it's necessary to understand that the sacrifice of Christ also reaches marriages and restores them to the original model described in Genesis.

Introduction

ooking at today's marriages, it seems that God's original design didn't work; especially if we allow ourselves to be carried away by the cold statistics of the world's facts.

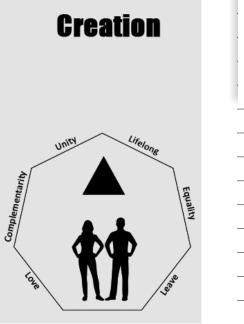
In this lesson, we will go to Genesis 1 and 2 to see God's original design. Then in Genesis 3 we will see how sin entered the scene and how its effects brought about a total change. Creation and humanity would no longer be the same after sin and sin would primarily affect the marriage God created. The original marriage model was affected and we see its consequences throughout the Old Testament and to this day.

Throughout the years, people built different relationship models that moved away from God's original plan. As much as the people insisted on supporting their own models, God never changed His plans and always insisted that His people stay with the original model. However, it wasn't until New Testament times that we saw the intervention of Christ and the redemption plan to redeem all things, including marriage (Colossians 1:19-20).

Is the marriage

Creation: The Original Model

Again we go to Genesis, to the beginning of all things, to discover God's original model. There we find a free and sovereign God who from the first moment is presented as God the Creator. In the first two chapters of Genesis, the writer shows us how from nothing, God creates an environment of perfect harmony, where everything develops according to his voice and his laws which he established to bless all of creation. It's so detailed that you can't believe it all happened by chance, necessity or the result of a consequence of events; everything



was established according to God's designed plan. Creation is a plan born from the very essence of God, which is love (1 John 4:8). All of creation was an act of love.

God created humankind (male and female), in his image (Genesis 1:27), united them in marriage (Genesis 2:24) and gave them the mission of taking care of all his creation (Genesis 1:28 - 30). This is where we understand that the origin of marriage is God himself and therefore, its nature is sacred. God designed monogamous heterosexual marriage as the stage to connect with Him, where each spouse sees God in the other spouse, a spouse created in God's image. This image of God is an image that, as a married couple, they project to others in their daily lives through the lifelong exercise of love. From the beginning, the direction and meaning for God's design was companionship, joy, and procreation. Finally, and as fundamental elements in the marriage model God designed, we find the principles of love, leaving, unity, equality, difference, complementarity, and lifelong commitment that we have seen in lessons 3 through 7. In conclusion, marriage is a good design for human beings, so much so that upon seeing it, God was totally pleased: "God saw all that he had made, and it was very good" (Genesis 1:31a).

So, we ask ourselves; "Why, today, are we so far from what God designed? What happened?" Now, we're going to look at how sin affected everything and fundamentally how it affected the model of marriage designed by God.

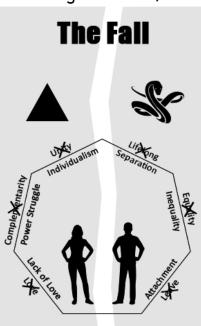




The Fall: Attack on the Original Model

James says, "If anyone, then, knows the good they ought to do and doesn't do it, it is sin for them" (James 4:17). According to the Bible, if someone doesn't know what is good or bad, what

they do cannot be considered a sin. But once the person knows what is good and acts contrary to it anyway, that is considered sin. Following the same idea, the apostle Paul writes to the Romans "... I would not have known what sin was had it not been for the law. For I would not have known what coveting really was if the law had not said, "You shall not covet" (Romans 7:7). Once again we find in the Bible the principle of sin is someone who violates a law given by God and known by humankind. Once God gives a law or command, failure to obey it is sin.



Humankind (male and female) was created superior to the other creatures in talent, intellect, with the ability to reason — to think logically and form conclusions — and with the ability to have communion (Genesis 1:26–28). The plan designed for humankind (male and female) would allow them to share everything in harmony and manage together all of God's creation. The union between the man and the woman would be harmonious, and they could enjoy each other and enjoy everything created. God addressed the man and the woman and shared with them all his plans and the responsibilities that they were to fulfill (Genesis 1:26–28). He also communicated the limits to them and warned them of the consequence if they disobeyed (Genesis 2:16–17).

In Genesis 3, we find the fall of humankind and its consequences "...she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband..." (v.6); this is the first transgression (violation) by humankind against a mandate given by God. Disobedience to God was the sin that brought change to all of creation, and disobediance damaged the relationship of man and woman united in marriage most of all. After the fall, it was no longer the same to live in the world God created. Throughout this chapter we see that humankind "...sought his own exaltation (vv.1-6). The result was humiliation (vv.7-10), alienation (vv.12-13), suffering (vv.16-1)."

Dr. Wheat says: "Genesis 3 describes the failure of the man and woman to obey God in an ideal setting; their fall from a state of innocence to one of sin and death, God's promise of redemption, and the expulsion of the couple from the Garden of Eden to lead a life of moral responsibility under new and difficult conditions."²

"...you will be like God, knowing good and evil" (Genesis 3:5). This explanation sounded good to the woman (isha) and she accepted. Wanting to be equal to God would cause ambition and pride to enter humankind. God's plan was for harmony between the couple, but Satan's plan, which is always contrary to God's,

attempted to cause disunity and inequality. As a consequence of sin we see that the relationship between man and woman, established by God at creation, would never be the same. The husband would be above the woman, and she would depend on the man. This would start a power struggle that would be reflected in different areas of the relationship. Circumstances had changed; it would not be easy to live according to God's plan because sin would make it difficult.

"Genesis 3 describes the failure of the man and woman to obey God in an ideal setting; their fall from a state of innocence to one of sin and death, God's promise of redemption, and the expulsion of the couple from the Garden of Eden to lead a life of moral responsibility under new and difficult conditions."

Beginning with Genesis 3, humankind (woman and man) crossed the boundary set by God which resulted in the partial breakdown of the image of God in man. From then on, death and conflicts entered the relationships between men and women. Both distanced themselves and began to accuse each other. They no longer saw themselves as equals and consequently highlighted their differences. The idea of complementarity and suitability disappeared and became a conflict. The woman, who had previously been seen as a companion, is now the cause of the problem: "The woman you put here with me" (Genesis 3:12). The man ceased to be her companion, no longer looking at her correctly, according to God's plan (Genesis 2:23), and he became her accuser and unable to assume his responsibility.

"I will make your pains in childbearing very severe; with painful labor you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you" (Genesis 3:16). The Latin American version of the Bible translates: "I will multiply your sufferings in pregnancy and you will give birth to your children with pain. You will always need a man, and he will dominate you." God was not commanding this to be so, it was the logical consequence of having allowed sin to take place in their lives. "But subjection to the will of her husband is a part of her curse; and sometimes this will is so capricious, that no human being could have a more painful punishment than to live as a subject and at the same time in a state of freedom... ."³ The woman will be left at a crossroads between her husband who attracts her and her autonomy. "The man, for his part, also has an unbalanced response: he takes advantage of the situation and exploits it, dominating it. He now sees her differently, he changes her name; She is no longer isha (woman), a term that highlights her identity (Genesis 2:23), but Eve (mother of all the living), a term that highlights her function (Genesis 3:20)."⁴ The suitability that

was planned in the beginning became simply useful and sexuality was simply reduced to sex. From that moment on, the history of marriage became a series of problems and fights that man modeled for his children and was installed in successive generations as a natural state in family relationships which continues to this day.

Beginning with sin, the history of marriage became a series of problems and fights that man modeled for his children and was installed in successive generations as a natural state in family relationships which continues to this day.

In Genesis 3:17 God told the man: "Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat food from it all the days of your life." Something as natural as getting food, a task that the couple should have performed in an organized manner, calmly and harmoniously (Genesis 1:28–30), would become a heavy burden for the man. The earth would no longer be the same, the initial perfect fertility would now be transformed into infertility and continuous problems (droughts, floods, etc.) due to the effect of sin. The land, instead of producing good seed, would produce thorns and thistles that would make the work more difficult (Genesis 3:18). "Instead of producing food grains and useful vegetation, weeds will be extraordinarily prolific, damaging the soil, choking good seed, and frustrating the hopes of the farmer."⁵

We cannot begin to think that after Adam and Eve sinned everything would remain the same. That natural unity in work and companionship that man and woman were created for would change as a result of sin. One would dominate the other (Genesis 3:16), turning equality and complementarity into inequality and a power struggle; the love that had united them would turn into lack of love and rejection (Genesis 3:12); principles such as leave, unity, and lifelong (Genesis 2:24) would change to attachment, individualism, and separation. Although the man and the woman would continue to live together as something natural, it would no longer be easy; both would have to work hard and fight against the existing temptations and evils. Power, injustice, humiliation, lack of understanding and deception, among other evils, had entered the world and would not stop until they became natural in everyday life. The marriage relationship of humankind (man and woman) would be severely affected.

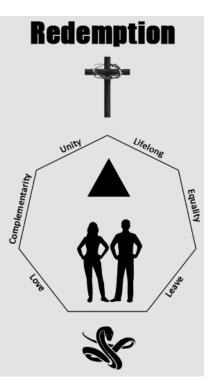
Redemption: Restoration of the Original Model

In the Gospel of John we find Jesus declaring the purpose of his coming and contrasting it with the purpose of the enemy of God. Jesus said: "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life, and have it

abundantly" (John 10:10 NRSV). The strength in the words of Jesus leads us to understand the forcefulness and scope of his statement. "Abundant life," said Jesus. This concept has often been misunderstood as referring to "a lot of something", and has often been related to material abundance.

The abundant life that Jesus came to give is for all humanity. It's life here and now, and eternal life in the future with Him; a life that only He can give (John 10:28), a new life in Him governed by new paradigms "so that they could live life to the fullest", as translated in the Common English Bible (John 10:10). It is life that the apostle Paul, writing to the Corinthians, referred to as a "new creation" in Christ. The apostle made it clear that "anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person (creation). The old life is gone; a new life has begun" (2 Corinthians 5:17 NLT).

"The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly" John 10:10 NRSV.



Jesus paid a high price for us, his own life. He did it to redeem us from sin, set us free in Him, and give us life to the full. The redemption of Christ gives us the opportunity to be recreated in Him. This affects everything in our lives (ourselves, our relationship with our fellow man, our relationship with God and with his creation). It gives us the opportunity to live the way that God planned when he created the world. This includes everything, which is why the apostle Paul said: "For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross" (Colossians 1:19-20).

Our married life today contrasts with the purpose of Jesus and what was achieved through his sacrifice. It seems that we have learned to survive, settling for glimpses of what Jesus came to give and of what life in Him should be. Sin affected everything, and somehow it has us captive, living in the shadow of Genesis 3. Sin has definitely done immense damage to everything created and marriage is no exception; it was the center of the enemy's attack. Therefore, we need to go back to the beginning and restore the original model that God planned for marriage when he created it, a marriage model that was redeemed by Christ.

When God became incarnate in Jesus, he came to save what was lost (Luke 19:10). We see an effort to make people understand that God's original plan had not changed and was to be lived out in all areas of life. That is why when the Pharisees confronted Jesus about marriage, He referred them to the Scriptures "Haven't you read..." and immediately led them to the original God-given design, to God's own plan, citing it as the only source of authority "...at the beginning the Creator 'made them male and female'... 'be united ... and the two will become one flesh'?" Jesus ignored the positions of the religious schools of his day (Shammai and Hillel) and the concern of the Pharisees to find an excuse for divorce (instead of seeking restoration), telling them "Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard. But it was not this way from the beginning," emphasizing again God's original model.

The evangelist Matthew wrote, "... a man will leave his father and mother, ...and the two will become one flesh. So they are no longer two, but one flesh" (Matthew 19:5–6a). This union, as we have already seen, is a union that cannot be separated without it breaking. "United, together like the oxen at the plow, each one must pull evenly, in order to advance."6 In these passages, Jesus not only says that they will be one but also remarks, "...what God has joined together, let no one separate." The two become one flesh in the intimacy and commitment of the sexual union reserved exclusively for marriage. It's interesting to see that people had been moving away from God's plan, but that didn't mean that God's plan had changed. That's why Jesus returns to what had been established at the beginning and reminds them that the separation of marriage was not in God's plans nor would it be: "Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate" (Matthew 19:6b). When a man and a woman decide to marry, God brings them together. The decision to unite is theirs, but God makes them one. Jesus was teaching that accepting divorce is disobedience to something approved by God. What God joined together is indissoluble. How can we humans pretend to undo what God did? So, Jesus restored the equality that had originally existed between man and woman. He did this (v.3) by denying the husband the option of divorce (v.8) and made a call not to accept divorce (v.9) as something approved by God.

The apostle Paul also helps us understand that redemption also reaches marriage, in such a way that it takes marriage back to the Paradise of creation. Hence, Paul follows the way of Jesus dignifying women and giving marriage a new paradigm in Christ.

The apostle Paul was the one who spoke the most about marriage in the New Testament. All of his writings lead to the restoration of marriage to the model God created.

In I Corinthians 7:3-5, Paul touches on the themes of mutuality, equality, and unity in marriage. Once married, he says that we relinquish dominion over ourselves to our spouse (v. 4), stating "that sexual intercourse between married persons is not only a valid aspect of marriage, but also an obligation consistent with need and desire. The verb translated fulfill means not the granting of a favor, but the fulfillment of an obligation here from the husband to the wife and from the wife to the husband."⁷ The apostle makes it clear that in marriage, life must be shared in its entirety and everything must be done by mutual agreement.

He also addresses the lifelong principle (I Corinthians 7:10–11). In essence, Paul refers to the mandate that Jesus had already given (Matthew 19:3–9; Mark 10:1–12 and Luke 16:18). In making this reference, Paul follows the teaching of Jesus and interprets that spouses must remain united and in the face of conflict seek

In Matthew 19:4-5 why do you think Jesus responded to the Pharisees with a question about Genesis 1:28 and 2:24?

reconciliation. "If a woman divorces her husband she must remain unmarried or she must be reconciled again with her husband, that is, she must resume the marriage partnership."⁸ In this passage Paul appeals to the essence of Christianity. Men and women are reconciled with God and called to be agents of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:18–20; Romans 5:10–11; Ephesians 2:16 and Colossians 1:20–22), an action that must begin in marriage.

The apostle wrote to the new converts at Ephesus who lived lifestyles contrary to the new life in Christ. At that time, marriage was a relationship of power and domination by men over women. For this reason he wrote very precise commands (imperatives) to the husbands (Ephesians 5:25–33), while what he wrote (indicative) to the wives (Ephesians 5:22–24) was how she was to respond her husband who lives guided by the Spirit under the fear of God (Ephesians 5:21). Paul thought that love was the most excellent way for interpersonal relationships (1 Corinthians 12:31–13: 8), so he introduces it as an example for marriage. This was rather daring if we consider that he's writing about the love that Christ embodied, that he gave absolutely everything and that he loves those who do not deserve it (John 3:16; Philippians 2:1–11).

When the apostle wrote, "Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord" (Ephesians 5:22), he did so after he wrote: "Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ" (Ephesians 5:21), indicating that such submission is mutual and not of a specific gender. He didn't write with authority in mind, but rather to restore God's plan of Genesis 2:24. The relationship between spouses that Paul presents directs them to the unity of a single body submitted to God.

The word "head" (Ephesians 5:23) has often been used to communicate the authority of the husband over the wife. But based on what we know of the apostle Paul, it's not possible to think that he wanted to establish a gender hierarchy or define a line of authority in the marriage relationship. Paul shows that in the marriage relationship and in the family, God is above all and God never delegated his place and authority in any way.

The apostle Paul was restoring to marriage the sacred value that God gave it from the beginning and dignifying the spouses as God's creation in a relationship of equals (Ephesians 5:21). For many people it's difficult to understand that the redemption of Christ is total, and therefore it includes marriage. It's understandable seeing that we live a world affected by sin, a fallen humanity living in perverse systems that subtly seduce us to incorporate sinful lifestyles that displace God's model.

Conclusion

On several occasions, and with concern, we have heard about healthy churches, but it's often forgotten that the health of the church is directly related to the health of its members. Yes, and with that same idea in mind, a healthy church will be healthy if it's made up of healthy marriages. Howard Snyder, in his book "*The Salvation of All Creation*" begins by asking, "Can there be a healthy church on a sick planet?"⁹ Similarly, and in relation to the issue at hand, we can ask ourselves, "Can there be a healthy church with sick marriages?" We can't live married life without asking ourselves and our spouses to what extent are we living out our relationship in the abundant life that Jesus provided. Have we restored God's original plan to our marriage? Are we intentionally attempting to live His way every day? God wants us to!



Activities

Instructions

Based on to everything you've studied, describe the model of marriage that God created.

Specifically, what damage was the result of sin?

Lesson 1:

- 1- The Hebrew term "adam" appears 25 times in the first two chapters of Genesis. The most common use is humankind or humanity, and does not carry any identification with the masculine gender. Another reference in the same line of thought is Genesis 5:2 (KJV): "Male and female created he them; and blessed them, and called their name Adam, in the day when they were created" On very few occasions is "adam" used as the proper name of the first male. The Hebrew term for male is ish and the Hebrew term for female is isha (same root). In fact, until Genesis 2:22 no gender distinction is mentioned, it always speaks of humankind or humanity.
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Lesson 3:

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- 5- Lewis, C.S. *Mere Christianity.* New York, NY: Touchstone, 1996. pg 100.
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- 7- Linero Gómez, Alberto. *Si estás enamorado, no te cases (If Your In Love, Don't Get Married).* Editorial Planet: Venezuela, 2016. pg 49.

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Lesson 4:

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- 4- "Leave." Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary, Merriam-Webster, https://www.merriam-webster. com/dictionary/leave. Accessed 30 Mar. 2022
- 5- Mack, Wayne. *Fortaleciendo el Matrimonio (Strengthening Your Marriage).* Grand Rapids: Portavoz: 1992. pg 11.
- 6- The expression "burn the ships" is used to refer to going forward with no possibility of returning. The expression has at least two sources. The oldest dates back to 335 BC and tells that when Alexander the Great landed on the shores of Persia, he saw that the enemy outnumbered them and that his army was frightened and defeated even before beginning the fight. It was then that Alexander the Great ordered his ships to be burned and while they burned he told his men: "Watch how the ships burn. That's the only reason we must win because if we don't win, we won't be able to return to our homes and reunite with our families again or leave this land that we despise. We must be victorious in this battle since there is only one way back and it's by sea. Gentlemen, when we return home we will do so the only way possible, in our enemies' ships." The second source refers to the Spanish conqueror Hernán Cortes in his conquest of Mexico (1519) who ordered the destruction (not sure if they were burned or sunk) of his ships so that no one would be tempted to turn back due to the difficulty of their mission.
- 7- Employment, profession or career. It's not about leaving a job like this for no reason, but it's when that job, profession or career competes with my spouse's place of priority, or puts conditions on my relationship in some way. For example, when one spouse is offered a job opportunity in another city and they decide to leave without caring how it affects their spouse because they say that they cannot miss out on the opportunity. Or when a spouse works in the family business and after marriage continues to work there despite the fact that because of the employment relationship the family influences the decisions of the marriage. Leaving means: first God, then your spouse, and then everything else. The spouse should be the priority after God even when children come. When children are present, your priorities should be: first God, then your spouse, then the children and then everything else.
- 8- "I have known some men who couldn't let go of their ties to hunting or golfing partners long enough for the necessary love affair with their respective wives. Some can't even tear themselves away from televised sports long enough to talk to their wives". Thomson, Les. La familia (The Family) United States: Unilit, 2003, pg 19.
- 9- Riso, Walter. *Desapegarse sin anestesia (Detach Without Anesthesia).* Colombiana, Colombia: Editorial Planeta, 2012. pg 18.
- 10-If for any reason, one of the spouses brings one of their parents to live with them in their home, the parent must know that their role has changed. They're no longer the parents who educate, exercise authority and control like when their children were living at home. They must understand that they're now living in their son or daughter's house and their role has changed and they must learn to function in this new role. Of course, the married couple needs to seriously discuss, pray about and consult scripture about this situation (before bringing the parent to live with them) to reach a solid agreement that will allow them to face the situation together.

Lesson 5:

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- 3- "kolláo" (κολλάω). Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words. Referred to: https:// www.blueletterbible.org/lexicon/g2853/kjv/tr/0-1/ and https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/ dictionary/viewtopic.cfm?topic=VT0000472 on 3/21/2022.
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Lesson 6:

- 1- The saying "the better half" comes from a myth in the play "The Symposium" by Plato (380 BC). The play is about love and different characters talk about it. The Greek comedian Aristophanes recounted that in the beginning humans were round, had four limbs, a head and two faces. There were three classes: man-man, woman-woman and the androgynous: man-woman. These beings, feeling love for one another, engendered their fellow beings, letting the seed fall to the ground. They were strong and proud to the point of believing themselves similar to the gods and rebelling against them. Jupiter punished them by cutting them in half and sent Apollo to heal the wound and turn their faces so that the memory of their misfortune would always be in sight. Since that day those beings are looking for their other half. (Platón, Obras completas, edición de Patricio de Azcárate, tomo 5, Madrid 1871, pp 289-291 [Platos Complete Works, edition by Patricio de Azcárate, volume 5, Madrid 1871, pp 289-291).
- 2- The Hebrew word "tsêlâ" has traditionally been translated as "rib", although its meaning is "side, rib" (the entire side or flank). In the Septuagint (Greek translation of the Old Testament), they used the Greek word "pleura" which just means "side", especially the side of the body. In the Greek it says that God "took one of his sides...and changed that side into a woman" (Genesis 2:21). Therefore, we can say that the woman was literally taken out, separated from the human being, not from the man. The male (ish) discovered himself as such when meeting the female (isha). Genesis 2:22 is the first time that the words "ish" male and "isha" female appear.
- 3- Working Paper "The Demand For Sons: Evidence From Divorce, Fertility, And Shotgun Marriage", accessed from NBER (National Bureau of Economic Research) Cambridge, MA, USA. February 2004. https://www.nber.org/papers/w10281
- 4- Femicide or Feminicide. https://oig.cepal.org/en/indicators/femicide-or-feminicide
- 5- Gender violence is when women suffer for the sole fact that they are women. It's protected by a patriarchal culture that legitimizes, naturalizes and tolerates it, this violence and discrimination is continuously reproduced through cultural patterns.

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- 8- Consejo Pontificio para los Laicos (Pontifical Council for the Laity). Web site: http://www.laici. va/content/laici/es/sezioni/donna/tema-del-mese/Complementarita.html
- 9- Población mundial (World Population). https://countrymeters.info/es/World
- 10-Most English versions of the Bible translate the Hebrew word "adam" to man, a few use person or human. There is sometimes confusion between the words "adam" meaning man or humankind and the proper name "Adam" the first man. Here its meaning is humankind or to be human.
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Lesson 7:

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- 3- Article: "4 Big Mistakes I Made As A Wife (Psst! I'm The Ex-Wife Now)" Posted 1/3/2022 by Sloane Bradshaw in her Blog "Your Tango". https://www.yourtango.com/2014245688/4-big-mistakes-imade-wife-psst-im-ex-wife-now#hide

Lesson 8:

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It is with great concern that we share our firm conviction that the institution of marriage is about to descend into a state of turmoil like no other time in human history. The enemy is attacking marriage from different angles, with the ultimate goal being to destroy it completely.

Marriage researchers have been warning of the threatening storm to which marriage is being subjected, a situation that is increasing exponentially. We could assume that this serious situation that marriage is experiencing does not concern Christian marriages. But when we look inside the Christian church, we discover that the marriages within the Christian faith are influenced by the enemy and suffer the same fatal consequences as those who do not live under the lordship of Christ and the values of the Kingdom.

There is an urgent need to develop marriage ministry in local churches from a pastoral perspective that promotes the development and growth of happily married couples.

This book, along with the first book, Organization of Marriage Ministries, will help you organize and lead an effective marriage ministry in your local church.

