

BIBLICAL BASIS OF MARRIAGE



DISCIPLES IN
MINISTRY

Biblical Basis of Marriage



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Contents

PRESENTATION	4
INSTRUCTIONS	5
Lesson 1: Origin and Nature of Marriage	7
Lesson 2: Purpose of Marriage	15
Lesson 3: Love, The Perfect Bond	23
Lesson 4: Leaving... The Beginning of a New Union	33
Lesson 5: One Plus One Equals One	39
Lesson 6: Same, Different, Complementary	47
Lesson 7: Until Death Do Us Part	57
Lesson 8: Restoration of the Original Model	65
Notes and Bibliography	77

Presentation

The 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

The 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 self-teaching 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.



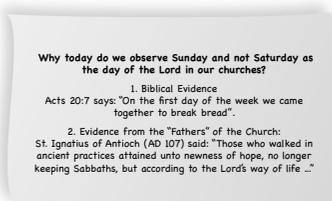
OBJECTIVES: The objectives are the goals that you will meet by the end of the lesson. We recommend that you read them and at the end of the lesson ask yourself if they have been met. These objectives are aimed at directing your values, shaping your convictions as a believer, and knowing what you need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



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.



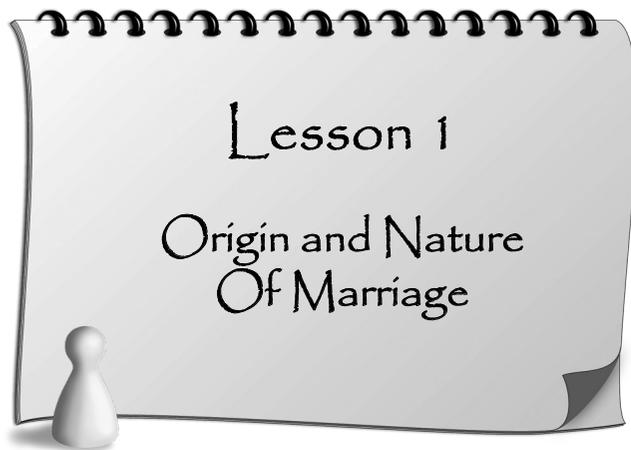
ACTIVITIES: At the end of each lesson you will find an exercise that will reinforce what you have learned through questions, activities or practical instruction. We suggest you dedicate the time necessary to complete each activity; this will allow you to self-assess your learning.

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



Lesson 1



Introduction

As 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."

OBJECTIVES

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

MAIN IDEAS

- 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.

Activities

Time



Instructions

What new things did you learn?



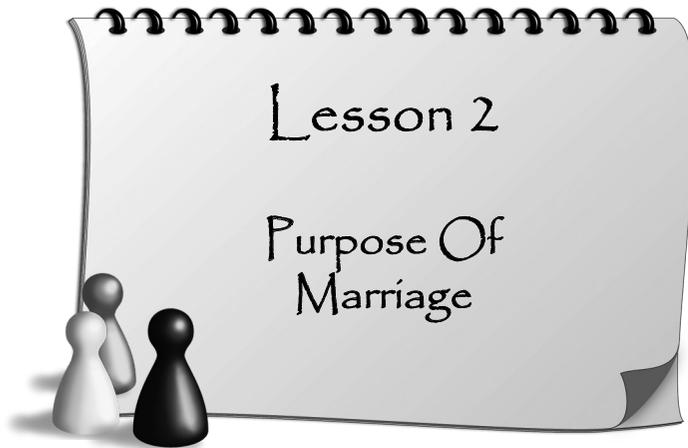
Do you think what you learned in this lesson is important for marriage ministry?
Why?

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

Purpose Of Marriage



Lesson 2



Why Get Married?

When you ask a bride and groom why they got married, you'll receive 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?

OBJECTIVE

- 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.

MAIN IDEAS

- 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.

Horizontal lines for writing notes.

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 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.

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

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? 

Activities

Time



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



Principles of Marriage

A principle is the first instance of the being of a thing. "A primary source: ORIGIN."¹ 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.

OBJECTIVES

- 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.

MAIN IDEAS

- 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.

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 two-sided 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 Is 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."

From a personal perspective, 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?"



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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.

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." ?

"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

“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 Is 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.

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).



Leaving...
The Beginning of a New Union



Lesson 4



Introduction

When 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

OBJECTIVE

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

MAIN IDEAS

- 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.

“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

One Plus One Equals One



Lesson 5



Introduction

Many 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).

OBJECTIVE

- 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.

MAIN IDEAS

- 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 inseparable.
- "Becoming one" requires dedication, effort, constant learning and daily and continuous commitment over time.

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 clings 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" (κολλάω) 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

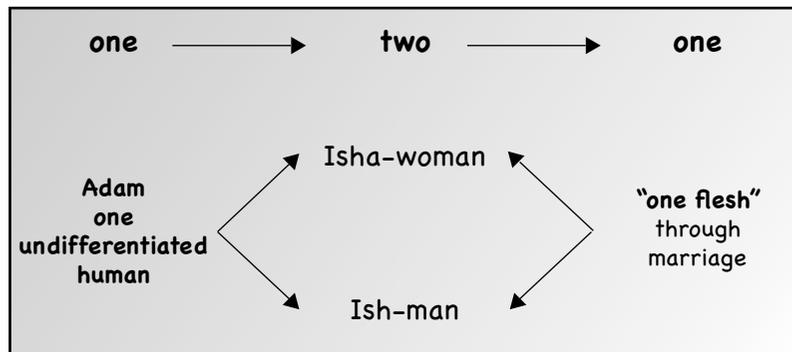
DISCIPLES IN MINISTRY

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).

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

Do you agree that many enter marriage with sexual damage that prevents them from having a satisfactory relationship like God planned?



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

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?



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Same, Different, Complementary



Lesson 6



Introduction

Perhaps 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.

OBJECTIVES

- 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.

MAIN IDEAS

- 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.

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)



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.

Different

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

God created men and women to be equal when it comes to rights and responsibilities. What factors influence our world that make this untrue in today's marriages?



Why do we say that human beings are complex?



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 preferring 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.

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 corresponding helper. It is not the male who is alone and needs 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."¹¹

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.

Until Death Do Us Part



Lesson 7



Introduction

TSome 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.

OBJECTIVE

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

MAIN IDEA

- 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.

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 Idea

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.



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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

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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 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.

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.

Comment on the following: Among the things blogger Sloane Bradshaw learned after her divorce was that marriage 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."

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

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

“At the resurrection people will neither marry nor be given in marriage; they will be like the angels in heaven.”
Matthew 22:30.

Jesus made it clear that in the resurrection there will be no marriage. In the Gospel of Matthew when the 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.

“God wants married couples to learn to accept each other and work with respect through their differences and disagreements.”



Comment on this quote.

Restoration Of the Original Model



Lesson 8



Introduction

Looking 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).

OBJECTIVES

- 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.

MAIN IDEAS

- 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.

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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- 4- <https://www.infobae.com/america/techo/2018/02/27/como-hacer-que-el-smartphone-deje-dominarnos-y-aprender-a-usarlo-en-nuestro-beneficio/>
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Lesson 2:

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Lesson 3:

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- 6- Thomas, Gary. *Sacred Marriage*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2000. pg 42.
- 7- Linero Gómez, Alberto. *Si estás enamorado, no te cases (If You're In Love, Don't Get Married)*. Editorial Planet: Venezuela, 2016. pg 49.

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- 2- Hamilton, Victor P. *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament: The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1-17*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1990. pg 181.
- 3- Wenham, Gordon J. *Word Biblical Commentary: Genesis 1-15*. United States: Word Books, 1987. pg 71.
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- 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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- 2- Vine, W.E. *Diccionario Expositivo de Palabras del Antigo y del Nuevo Testamento Exhaustivo (Comprehensive Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words)*. United States: Caribe Publishing, 1999. pg 283.
- 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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- 9- Thomas, Gary. *Sacred Marriage*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2000. pg 221.

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.
- 11- Hahn, Roger L. *Making a Marriage*. Larry R. Morris, ed. Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 2007. pg 14
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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-i-made-wife-psst-im-ex-wife-now#hide>

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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.



DISCIPLES IN
MINISTRY