

The Original Pattern for Marriage

The Book of Genesis gives us the foundations, for all biblical truth. Among the first matters addressed in this first of the Bible's books is that of marriage and the family. The family is presented as a divinely-ordained and ordered institution. It was created for man's happiness and success. If we are to fix the problems we may have in our marriages and families today, we must "go back to the basics," and discover what God says marriage is really about. Read Genesis 1, 2, and 3, and then study with us the five elements in the original plan for marriage.

1. A Man With A Job to Do.

Genesis 1 gives us a chronological account of God's creation of the heaven and the earth. In this account, we are told that man (made the sixth day) was to "be fruitful and multiply" and to "subdue" and "have dominion over" the earth and all the creatures upon it (See vs. 26-28). Genesis 2 gives us a description of creation as it related to man. The order in which things were made is not important to the account in Chapter 2. This chapter revolves around the importance of man to creation. Man had a big job to do, an important role to fill, a critical function at the center of God's creation. Note especially Genesis 2:5, 15, and 18, in the light of these facts. Man was made in God's image to rule the earth for God. Specifically his first job was "to till the ground...to dress...and to keep" the Garden of Eden. A successful marriage begins with a man who finds that God has given him a job to do. Your relationship with God and your understanding of God's will for your life have a great effect on the success on your marriage.

DECISION: Every man should get right with God, and surrender to do the will of God for his life. These decisions will get the single man ready for marriage, and will begin immediately to help the married man solve problems in his home.

The primary relationship in a person's life is with God. You cannot ignore, deny, disobey, or resist Him without suffering serious consequences. You cannot yield to Him without receiving His mercy and blessing! Read Matthew 6:31-33 and Romans 12:1-2. See what the Bible says about God's rightful place in your life.

2. A Woman To Help Him Do It.

The story of God's formation of the first woman is one of the most romantic stories in the world! Adam needed "an help" (a helper) "meet" (fitting) for him, and the Lord had him check out every animal He had made to see if any of them would be suitable for the job. Of course, God knew that "an help meet for" Adam would not be found in the animal world, but He wanted Adam to find this to be true. In all of creation, no creature made thus far would qualify to be the helper man needed. Therefore God crowned His creation by making the woman--the helper man needed. He took her from his side. She was to be Adam's helper! Do you see what Genesis 2 is saying about the role of the wife? Adam had a job to do for God, and Eve was made to help him do it. The Hebrew word for "help" in this passage does not imply any inferiority of the woman to the man. Man, we must remember, was not complete without the woman (Genesis 2:18). The married man must "cleave unto his wife" (Genesis 2:24) because he needs her. Marriage is not a greater one served by a lesser one, but there is a difference in the roles of husband and wife.

The "fifty-fifty" marriage does not work. Both man and wife must give and give in the marriage relationship, but the woman must accept that God's will in her life is wrapped up in her husband. If he is not seeking to do God's will for his life, she must make it a priority matter to win him over to an honest consecration of his life. Read carefully I Peter 3:1-2 and I Corinthians 7:13-16.

3. A Commitment in Innocence.

Read, memorize, and absorb the words of Genesis 2:24-25. Here we learn what God said at the first "wedding ceremony." Marriage is an unconditional life-long commitment between a man and a woman. After such a solemn

commitment is made, the couple may rightfully give their bodies to one another with the prospects of producing children (See Hebrews 13:4). He sanctifies sex only in the marriage relationship, so that children grow up with two parents absolutely united, in a stable and secure home. This is why a marriage license makes the difference between marriage and fornication. Marriage is commitment, not cohabitation.

DECISION: Everyone should say that he will not engage in sex relations outside the marriage bond.

Notice that the original man and woman were perfect and holy, and were not ashamed (had no reason to be) even in their nakedness. The meaning here is that, before they sinned, Adam and Eve had nothing for which to feel shame. The shame a God-fearing person feels today when naked comes from the fact that we are sinful creatures because of Adam's fall. The sin of man now makes clothing appropriate and right (See Genesis 3:1-7 and 3:21). We are covering ourselves out of shame for what we are. The thing that spoiled the perfection of the first marriage was sin against God. Today sin is the main enemy of happiness in the home. To do right and to repent of sin are two important factors in establishing and preserving a good home.

4. A Chain of Command.

After their sin, several things changed for Adam and Eve. Sin changed their very natures, and these changes altered their roles in the marriage. Adam was still the prime worker, but now his work would be hard and wearisome (Genesis 3:17-19). Eve was still Adam's helper, but now to help would mean submission to his authority over her (Genesis 3:16). In innocence, worker and helper operated in harmony with no hindrance. Now in sin, there must be a chain of command to provide for harmony. See the concept of authority and submission in Ephesians 5:21 through 6:9. See it also in Romans 13:1-2. It is still not that man is better, smarter, or more worthy than woman; but their differing roles now call for the wife to comply with the husband's wishes. Don't get this wrong, now! The man is nowhere told to demand his wife's submission; she is told to give it willingly because it is God's will for her. The man is not told to make all the decisions himself; he needs her and should make family decisions with her help. This scripture does mean that when two sinners married to each other disagree about a matter, the wife is to subject her desires to her husband's.

DECISION: A woman should not marry a man she will not follow. Everyone should honor the divinely-ordained chain of command in the home.

5. A Desire for Children

After God's pronouncement of the consequences of sin, Adam turned to his wife and called her "Eve" (Genesis 3:20). Her name meant "living." Adam told her that he gave her this name because she was to be "the mother of all living." One of the primary purposes of marriage is procreation. Reproduction was part of Adam's "job," as we are told in Genesis 1:28, and he certainly could not fulfill this aspect without his wife's help! It is natural for married couples to want children. God says that two married people are "heirs together of the grace of life" (I Peter 3:7). In the Bible, to have children is good and not to have children in a marriage is an unhappy situation. Read Genesis 25:20-21, Genesis 30:1-2 and 22-23, and Psalm 127. For some couples, it is not God's will that they have their own biological offspring. But always children should be the desire of Christian couples, and the subject of prayer. The aversion some have to bringing children into the world is an attitude not generated by biblical teachings or holy ideals. It is a sentiment created by the upside-down philosophy of the world. Womanhood is fulfilled and manhood is elevated by the acceptance of parenthood.

Many, many couples try to build a home on principles exactly apposite to the valid principles upon which God built the original family. To solve problems, we must change our ideas to conform to God's!