

## Marriage and Family

**Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. (Genesis 2:24)**

In Genesis 1-2, the reader sees God creating marriage and family. God is the officiant at the first marriage (2:22). God is the One who gave the commandment for humans to procreate (1:28). God is the One who creates one person as a male, and another as a female. God created only two genders – everything else is a distortion from the Fall. God is the One who designed procreation in such a way that a child has a father and a mother. The father is the male. The mother is the one who carries and delivers the child into the world (or a woman, such as a surrogate, who assumes the same role in the child's life.) Women are different from males, and what sets them apart from males is the biological capacity to give birth. Heterosexual marriage is God's plan. God-designed families are the foundation of a flourishing civilization.

It is God Himself who said, "It is not good that the man [Adam] should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him" (2:18). Men and women do better in opposite-sex monogamous relationships. Polygamy is a result of the Fall. Children flourish when their biological father and mother raise them. Endless studies have proven this. (This is not to say that children can't do well in other situations.) Adoption is good and necessary because of the fallen nature of a sinful world. Having created the woman, God "brought her to the man" (2:22). Marriage is God's idea. God brought Eve to the altar, and God is the One who said a man "must hold fast [unite or bond] to his wife" (2:24).

The woman is the helper "fit for him." This simple sentence is packed with implications. "Fit for him" is, at first, a biological statement. Men and women fit each other in the ONLY one flesh relationship that produces children, which is being fruitful and multiplying. If humanity ceases to engage in procreation, it will eventually cease to exist. Based on the current mortality rates (2023), a nation-state needs a birthrate of 2.1 children per female to maintain a stable population. Some cannot get pregnant; others refuse. There is a need for some women to give birth to 3 or 4 children to offset those who don't give birth and children who die prematurely. None of this suggests that giving birth is the only role of women. Beginning with His birth into the world, women were very involved in Christ's ministry on this earth. Deborah led Israel in Judges; Paul recognizes Phoebe for her help to the church as a servant (Rom 16:1).

But, a helper "fit for him" is much more than biological. God made the woman in such a way that she completes the male. The male is incomplete without his helper. Helper is not a demeaning or derogatory description. It does not imply less. God made both males and females in His image. Hebrews 13:6 describes Yahweh as our helper. The ESV describes the Holy Spirit as the believer's "Helper" (John 14, 15, 16). The Holy Spirit comes alongside the believer and does life with them. Husbands and wives come alongside each other and help one another. Sometimes there are exceptions. The Apostle Paul speaks of singleness being a gift from God for a life dedicated to advancing the gospel and the kingdom of God (1Co 7). But for those who have not been given this gift of celibacy, God's plan is marriage. The wife brings into the marriage emotional insight, wisdom, and fulfillment that the man cannot gain from a same-sex relationship.

God's plan, according to Genesis 2:24, is for young men and women to grow up, leave their birth families, and start new families. The man and his wife can be naked, united, and unashamed in the marriage covenant. Hebrews 13:4 tells us to hold marriage in high esteem. Honor opposite-sex marriage. Celebrate opposite-sex marriages. Jesus performed His first miracle at a wedding party. Expect children from married couples. Verse 4 instructs us to "keep the marriage bed undefiled for God will judge sexual immorality and adultery." God's solution for the natural desires He has built into males and females is to find a person of the opposite sex, examine them for their faith in Christ, and fall in love. And then, unite with a promise to be the wife or husband God expects for the other until death separates one from the other. Sometimes divorce separates husbands and wives, but this is a necessary evil because of the hardness of the human heart (Mat 19). Neither divorce nor polygamy was ever part of God's plan from the beginning.

Finally, the Fall of man brought difficulty into marriage. Genesis 3:16 reveals that a woman's desire is sometimes contrary to her husband's. Simply put, they don't always get along. She will feel like his leadership is more like ruling, and he will feel like she is being contrary. Both must recognize this is part of the curse and work together to eliminate the consequences of the Fall in their marriage. This will require the grace of God to forgive and the hard work of applying what the Holy Spirit convicts and reveals concerning sin and what glorifies God in the Gospel and His Word.