



Part 1 - Purpose in Marriage

DAY 1

What does it mean to be "one flesh" in a marriage?

Answer: The term **one flesh** comes from the Genesis account of the creation of Eve. Genesis 2:21-24 describes the process by which God created Eve from a rib taken from Adam's side as he slept. Adam recognized that Eve was part of him—they were in fact **one flesh**. The term **one flesh** means that just as our bodies are one whole entity and cannot be divided into pieces and still be a whole, so God intended it to be with the marriage relationship. There are no longer two entities (two individuals), but now there is one entity (a married couple). There are a number of aspects to this new union.

As far as emotional attachments are concerned, the new unit takes precedence over all previous and future relationships (Genesis 2:24). Some marriage partners continue to place greater weight upon ties with parents than with the new partner. This is a recipe for disaster in the marriage and is a perversion of God's original intention of **leaving and cleaving**. A similar problem can develop when a spouse begins to draw closer to a child to meet emotional needs rather than to his or her partner.

Emotionally, spiritually, intellectually, financially, and in every other way, the couple is to become one. Even as one part of the body cares for the other body parts (the stomach digests food for the body, the brain directs the body for the good of the whole, the hands work for the sake of the body, etc.), so each partner in the marriage is to care for the other. Each partner is no longer to see money earned as "my" money; but rather "our" money. Ephesians 5:22-33 and Proverbs 31:10-31 give the application of this **oneness** to the role of the husband and the wife, respectively.

Physically, they become **one flesh**, and the result of that **one flesh** is found in the children that their union produces; these children now possess a special genetic makeup, specific to their union. Even in the sexual aspect of their relationship, a husband and wife are not to consider their bodies as their own but as belonging to their partner (1 Corinthians 7:3-5). Nor are they to focus on their own pleasure but rather the giving of pleasure to their spouse.

This oneness and desire to benefit each other is not automatic, especially after mankind's fall into sin. The man, in Genesis 2:24 (KJV), is told to **cleave** to his wife. This word has two ideas behind it. One is to be "glued" to his wife, a picture of how tight the marriage bond is to be. The other aspect is to "pursue hard after" the wife. This "pursuing hard after" is to go beyond the courtship leading to marriage, and is to continue throughout the marriage. The fleshly tendency is to do what feels good to me rather than to consider what will benefit the spouse. And this self-centeredness is the rut that marriages commonly fall into once the honeymoon is over. Instead of each spouse dwelling upon how his or her own needs are not being met, he or she is to remain focused on meeting the needs of the spouse.

As nice as it may be for two people to live together meeting each other's needs, God has a higher calling for the marriage. Even as they were to be serving Christ with their lives before marriage (Romans 12:1-2), now they are to serve Christ together as a unit and raise their children to serve God (1 Corinthians 7:29-34; Malachi 2:15; Ephesians 6:4). Priscilla and Aquila, in Acts 18, would be good examples of this. As a couple

pursues serving Christ together, the joy which the Spirit gives will fill their marriage (Galatians 5:22-23). In the Garden of Eden, there were three present (Adam, Eve, and God) and there was joy. So, if God is central in a marriage today, there also will be joy. Without God, a true and full oneness is not possible. (source: www.GotQuestions.org)

Study Questions

1. What does it mean that two become **one flesh**?
2. How do you become one with your spouse but not find your identity in them?
3. If two people become one, can they ever become “un-one”? If yes, explain what the consequences might be.
4. Why is it so important to understand oneness in marriage?
5. If you are **one flesh** with your spouse, who are you hurting when you sin against them? Describe a circumstance of how this would play out.
6. How does understanding that two become one help you in your marriage?
7. Why is **leaving and cleaving** so important for a marriage relationship?

DAY 2

What does it mean to be “one flesh” in a marriage?

God’s definition of marriage can be found in Genesis 2:24: “For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become **one flesh**.” In the Bible, the Hebrew word **basar** is often translated as **flesh**, but however it is interpreted, it always refers to the physical part of humanity. What does it mean, then, that a man and woman become **one flesh** in marriage?

The most obvious way is through sex. This is borne out in 1 Corinthians 6:16 when Paul says even a man with a prostitute becomes **one flesh** with her. The act of sex is a manifestation of **one flesh** physically and a metaphor for the other ways a married couple joins together.

Much of the physical part of life involves maintenance—feeding, housing, and repairing. A man and woman become **one flesh** in marriage when they share these things as a unit. A man is called to **leave** his parents—to step out of their home and provision—and become **one flesh** with his wife. As husband and wife work

together in the stuff of life, they become united, and may even start to look like each other. The flesh is also how we actively respond to what Jesus has done for us. God has prepared good works ahead of time for us to accomplish (Ephesians 2:10). As **one flesh**, a married couple coordinates their efforts to ensure they get the work done—both as individuals and as a team. As any couple surrounded by kids, church, work, and friends knows, husbands and wives cannot fulfill their God-given duties unless they work together.

Beyond practical and spiritual matters, we need to realize that our flesh belongs to our spouse (1 Corinthians 7:4), and the way we treat our body needs to reflect the respect we have for our spouse. As trivial as it may sound, things like fitness, hair styles, and tattoos should always be considered with your spouse in mind. Falling into poor health through negligence directly affects the lifestyle of your spouse. Asking for input regarding clothes and hair shows that you care how your spouse sees you. This also applies to physical behavior. It is disrespectful to flirt, dress revealingly, or in any other way use your body and actions to infer that you are not **one flesh** with your spouse.

The world is going to try to pull all of this apart. It's going to say that your body is your own, to use and treat as you see fit. It's going to insist you have to look a certain way or do certain things with your body in order to fit in. It will also lure you away from the united home life in the name of freedom, independence, and what you "deserve." Instead, God says that in marriage, a couple becomes **one flesh**, to live together, honor each other with their bodies and serve Him with their combined lives. (www.CompellingTruth.org)

Study Questions

1. Read Mark 10:1-9. What does God say about becoming one flesh with your spouse?
2. Why do you think God takes oneness so serious?
3. What can get in the way of growing in your oneness as a couple?
4. How does a unified marriage that reflects oneness witness to an unbeliever?
5. How can marriage help us accomplish God's will in our life? How can God accomplish His will in a single person's life?
6. How can marriage complicate being Christ-like? 1 Corinthians 7:32-35
7. What is a benefit of being single? Read 1 Corinthians 7:32-35

DAY 3

Commitment of One Man and Woman

First, as the title reminds us, marriage is the uniting of one man and one woman in covenant commitment for a lifetime. Genesis 2:24 (“For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh”) establishes, from the very beginning of biblical revelation, these various elements of the declaration on marriage. Marriage is between a man and woman only. Clearly, homosexual union is here specifically and intentionally excluded, as it is elsewhere in Scripture denounced (e.g., Lev. 18:22; 20:13; Rom. 1:27). But marriage of a man and woman is designed, blessed, and sanctioned by God himself. Furthermore, the “leaving and cleaving” of Gen. 2:24 indicates both the covenant commitment of marriage (i.e., the man leaves parents to take the woman to himself and to be joined to her alone) and its lifelong nature (i.e., the joining of two into **one flesh** indicates a new and indissoluble union).

Purposes of Marriage

Second, marriage does serve the God-ordained purposes of providing wondrous fellowship and lifelong companionship (Gen. 2:18–20 with 22–24), the proper and blessed context for holy sexual expression (1 Tim. 4:3–5; Heb. 13:4), and God’s appointed means for “filling the earth” with his human images (Gen. 1:27–28; 9:1; Ps. 127:3; Mal. 2:15). These purposes stand at the very center of stable civilization, without which perversion, abuse, alienation, and anarchy would prevail.

Balance of Biblical Teaching

Third, an important balance is clearly set forth in biblical teaching on the nature of manhood and womanhood. Male and female represent simultaneously equality and distinction, sameness and difference. As image of God, a husband and wife are fully and unqualifiedly equal. The theology of Genesis 1:27 (both male and female are created in “the image of God”) no doubt stands behind Peter’s stern warning in 1 Peter 3:7b. If husbands are to have their prayers heard, he says, they are to treat their wives with due honor and respect. What reason is given for this admonition? Their wives, he declares, just as fully as themselves, are “coheirs” of the fullness of the grace of Christ. Paul in Galatians 3:28 declares that male and female, no less than Jew and Greek or slave and free, are equal partakers of the fullness of Christ.

Study Questions

1. Is the Bible clear that marriage is between a man and a woman? (Read Leviticus 18:22; 20:13; Romans 1:18-27)
2. What does it mean to “leave and cleave” based on Genesis 2:24?
3. Was it hard for you to shift from being emotionally and physically dependent on your parents to your spouse? If so why?
4. Since husband and wife are one flesh, why do they hide things from each other? Is there anything you are withholding from your spouse? If so why?

5. Are you a bad Christian if you need help in your marriage? If no, then why do married couples not ask for help?
6. Knowing marriage is a lifelong commitment, how does that help you in the short term?

DAY 4

Complementary Roles

But the Bible has more to say about men and women than their equality. Husbands and wives have different, yet complementary, God-ordained roles. Many cultural observers have noted as one of our most severe and pervasive societal problems the passive and/or absentee husband and father. Secular feminism has convinced men, wrongly, that they are not to lead. Surely they are not to abuse their leadership (see 1 Peter 3:7a where husbands are to treat their wives in understanding ways, and Eph. 5:23–25 where his headship is exercised in the context of love). But they are to lead! Husbands are called to take up afresh this responsibility.

Correspondingly, wives are commanded in Scripture to submit to their husbands. Literally, this calls wives to “place themselves in support of” the leadership and direction their husbands are providing. Wives are to assist and encourage their husbands while husbands are commanded to love and care for their wives. All attempts to deny this teaching in Ephesians 5:22–33 have one stubborn fact to contend with: the husband/wife relationship is likened to the relationship between Christ and the Church. Scripture fully supports, the husband-wife relationship “is God’s unique gift to reveal the union between Christ and His Church.” Ephesians 5:23–24 envisions, by analogy, wives in the place of the church before Christ (“as the Church is subject to Christ, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands in everything”), while 5:25 sees husbands, also by analogy, in the place of Christ (“husbands love your wives just as Christ also love the Church”). While Christ serves the Church, loves the Church, humbles himself for the Church, He certainly does not follow the leadership of the Church! And while the church labors and strives, at times with great innovation, creativity and ingenuity, in all of this she seeks, always and only, to bow to the Lordship of Christ and to do what is pleasing in his sight (2 Cor. 5:9; Col. 1:10).

Paul’s analogy here shows how right it is to affirm the goodness and wisdom for husbands to exercise loving leadership while wives exert gracious and submissive support. The Bible (Eph. 5:22–33; Col. 3:18–19; 1 Pet. 3:1–7) affirms this as God’s wise design and good command.

The Blessing of Children

Fourth, as Psalm 127:3 so beautifully says, children are a gift and blessing from God. Amazingly, God gives to human parents the privilege to bring forth, by their sexual union, new and unique image bearers (Gen. 1:26–28). Genesis 5:1–3 is instructive here. Adam, who with his wife were created in the image of God, now has a son who is born in his (i.e., Adam’s) likeness and image. Parents, then, produce by their union, children who bear both the image of their parents and, through them, the image of their creator God. What awesome privilege! What sobering responsibility! Parents, by this role of “co-creator” of human images, stand in God’s place before their children.

The fifth commandment (“Honor your father and mother. . .” Exod. 20:12) stands between the first four, directed at our vertical relationship with God, and the final five, directed at our horizontal relationship with

others. Parents stand as God's representative authorities to their children. Honor of parents represents honor of God. Hence, parents ought to seek to raise their children to respect their God-given authority, yet as always, the Bible warns against abuse. "Fathers," writes the apostle Paul, "do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord" (Eph. 6:4). And children are to honor their parents by showing respect and obedience "in the Lord" (Eph. 6:1). Such wisdom, such balance, and such wholeness.

In summary—

- Marital union is of one man and one woman in a lifelong covenant commitment;
- the purposes of marriage—fulfilling companionship, holy sexual expression, and the joy and responsibility of procreation;
- the husband's God-given responsibility to lead in love, and the wife's God-ordained duty to support her husband with respect;
- the place of parents to train their children in the Lord and of children to honor and obey their parents—and these are given for the wholeness and holiness of God's people.
- May God grant us eyes to see, minds to comprehend, hearts to embrace, and wills to implement these wise, good, and liberating biblical admonitions.

Study Questions

1. What is the Biblical role for the Husband?
2. What is the Biblical role for the wife?
3. If we have different roles and functions does that mean we have different value? Why or why not?
4. Does marriage need equal authority to have equal value? Why or why not?
5. How can marriages reflect the relationship between Christ and the Church?
6. How does unconditional love help submission?
7. Why do you think people struggle with the equal in value but different in function and roles concept for marriage as mentioned in the Bible?

DAY 5

Question: "What is the purpose of marriage?"

Answer: Is it necessary for a Christian to marry? What is the purpose of marriage? The Bible has a lot to say about this topic. Since the first marriage was between the first man and the first woman, it is assumed that marriage is God's will for most people. It was instituted "in the time of man's innocence" and is therefore a holy institution. The first reason that the Bible gives for the existence of marriage is simple: Adam was lonely and needed a helper (Genesis 2:18). This is the primary purpose of marriage—fellowship, companionship, and mutual help and comfort.

One purpose of marriage is to create a stable home in which children can grow and thrive. The best marriage is between two believers (2 Corinthians 6:14) who can produce godly offspring (Malachi 2:13-15). In Malachi, God tells the Israelites that He will not accept their offerings because they have been unfaithful to the wives of their youth. This shows how much God cares about marriage being kept intact. Not only that, but He tells them He was seeking "godly offspring." This is a puzzling passage, and has been interpreted to mean a) that godly offspring are the purpose of marriage; b) that a good marriage between two godly people will mean that any children they have will tend to be godly as well; c) God wanted the Israelites to be faithful to their wives instead of leaving them for foreign women who would produce for them ungodly offspring because of the idolatry of those nations; and d) that God Himself was seeking His own offspring (the people) to exhibit godliness by their faithfulness. In any of these interpretations, we see a common theme: the children of faithful people will tend to be faithful too.

Not only does marriage teach children how to be faithful and give them a stable environment in which to learn and grow, it has a sanctifying effect on both marriage partners when they submit to God's law (Ephesians 5). Every marriage has difficult moments or difficult dynamics. When two sinful people are trying to create a life together, they must submit to God's command to love each other as God has loved us—selflessly (1 John 3:16). Our attempts to follow God's commands in our own strength tend to end in failure, and that failure tends to make the believer more aware of his dependence on God and more open to the Spirit's work in him, which tends to result in godliness. And godliness helps us to follow God's commands. So, marriage is very helpful for the one trying to live a godly life; it helps to scrub the heart clean of selfishness and other impurities.

Marriage also protects individuals from sexual immorality (1 Corinthians 7:2). The world we live in is full of sexual images, innuendo, and temptation. Even if a person doesn't pursue sexual sin, it pursues him or her, and it is very hard to escape it. Marriage provides a healthy place to express sexuality, without opening oneself up to the severe emotional (and many times physical) damage that is caused by casual, non-committed sexual relationships. It is clear that God created marriage for our good (Proverbs 18:22), to make us happy, to promote a healthier society, and to produce holiness in our lives.

Finally, marriage is a beautiful picture of the relationship between Christ and His church. The body of believers that make up the Church are collectively called bride of Christ. As bridegroom, Jesus gave His life for His bride, "to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word" (Ephesians 5:25-26), and His selfless act provides an example for all husbands. At the Second Coming of Christ, the church will be united with the Bridegroom, the official "wedding ceremony" will take place and, with it, the eternal union of Christ and His bride will be actualized (Revelation 19:7-9; 21:1-2).

Study Questions

1. What is God's purpose for creating marriage?

2. Is there more to marriage than being happy?
3. Why do you think marriage has changed from pursuing unconditional love to conditional happiness?
4. How does marriage help sanctify us?
5. What principals should children learn from a Godly marriage?
6. What would people learn by watching your marriage?
7. What are people learning by watching Christian marriages now?
8. How should a Christian marriage be different than a non-Christian marriage?