

# Marriage and Gender Roles

## Intimacy & Sexuality

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### The Divine Union

*Gen 2:18,21-24*

*18 And the LORD God said, "It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him." ...*

*21 And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place.*

*22 Then the rib which the LORD God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man.*

*23 And Adam said: "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; She shall be called Woman, Because she was taken out of Man."*

*24 Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.*

In these verses, Moses told the story of the creation of Eve and the origin of marriage. It is significant that the sole purpose the woman was created was to be a wife. She was obviously not an afterthought, because God had already created both genders of all the animals, complete with their reproductive systems. Adam, when created, possessed the male reproductive system that is useless without a female. God could have easily created Adam and Eve as two individuals, of opposite genders, just like the animals. But, He didn't. He had a special purpose in mind for his masterpiece, humanity, which rose far above merely individuality and the ability to procreate.

Moses provided us with a considerable amount of information regarding God's intentions for marriage, something not found in the animal kingdom. From God's statement in verse 18, we learn the following facts about the uniqueness of the human condition:

- Being alone is not good for a man.
- He needs a companion that is "comparable to him."
- This companion was to be a "helper."

Eve was to be joined to Adam in a way that no animals were joined with their mates. Animal mating is strictly for reproduction. Animals typically have many mates in their lifetimes. But humans were intended to have one mate for life. Eve's origin, from Adam's own flesh, was meant to illustrate the woman's place

in marriage. Adam's reaction in calling her "woman" was to highlight her intimate connection to himself.

### **The Meaning of Becoming "One Flesh"**

*Genesis 2:23-24*

*23 And Adam said: "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; She shall be called Woman, Because **she was taken out of Man.**"*

*24 Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and **they shall become one flesh.***

The Apostle Paul commented on Genesis 2:18-24, drawing an obvious conclusion from it.

*Ephesians 5:27-31*

*28 So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself.*

*29 For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church.*

*30 For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones.*

*31 "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh."*

Paul explained the reason God created Eve from Adam's own flesh. It was to graphically portray what He intended the man and woman to be, a married couple that become "one flesh." Becoming "one flesh" is meant both as a metaphor and literally. The metaphor is explained by Paul above, that the man must cherish his wife as part of his own body. So, Paul commanded that a Christian man must love and care for his wife with the same devotion he has for his own body.

The literal sense in which man and wife become "one flesh" is realized in two ways. First, when they consummate their marriage with sexual intercourse, they become "one flesh." In the sexual act itself, there is a union of the male and female bodies. That God regards sexual intercourse as the consummation of marriage is clearly established in ancient Jewish wedding customs of the Old Testament. The celebration of the guests at a Jewish wedding continued until the bride and groom came out of the wedding chamber having consummated the marriage with sexual intercourse. The wedding vows alone were not considered the sealing of the marriage. The completion of the sealing of the marriage was the sexual union that followed (Genesis 29:19-25).

The Law of Moses provided regulations concerning virginity, and provisions for immediate divorce for a man who discovers that his new wife was not a virgin

when he married her (Deuteronomy 22:13-19). Virginity was a gift that the woman must reserve for her husband (and by implication the husband also for his new wife).

The Bible forbids sexual intercourse outside of marriage. The Apostle Paul considered sexual intercourse to be the consummation of marriage even if it was done with a prostitute! In other words, a man who goes to a prostitute is essentially married to her in God's sight simply by engaging in the sexual act.

*1 Corinthians 6:15-17*

*15 Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a harlot? Certainly not!*

*16 Or do you not know that he who is joined to a harlot is one body with her? For "the two," He says, "shall become one flesh."*

Paul stated that intercourse with a prostitute is a "marriage" in God's sight by immediately citing what consummates a marriage in Genesis 2:24. It is clear from this passage why casual sex is forbidden by God, and why marriage is for life.

The conception of a child includes a blend of physical substance and DNA from both father and mother. And it is through the act of intercourse that man and wife join their substance and literally produce another person consisting of the substance and characteristics of both. In their children both man and wife remain "one flesh" long after their deaths in every generation that follows them.

### **Continued Physical Intimacy in Marriage**

*Proverbs 5:15-21*

*15 Drink water from your own cistern, and running water from your own well.*

*16 Should your fountains be dispersed abroad, streams of water in the streets?*

*17 Let them be only your own, and not for strangers with you.*

*18 Let your fountain be blessed, and rejoice with the wife of your youth.*

*19 As a loving deer and a graceful doe, let her breasts satisfy you at all times; and always be enraptured with her love.*

*20 For why should you, my son, be enraptured by an immoral woman, and be embraced in the arms of a seductress?*

*21 For the ways of man are before the eyes of the LORD, and He ponders all his paths.*

The above passage likens purity within marriage to a private well (representing the wife). Going after another woman who is not your wife is likened to drinking water from the street, where people walk, and the excrement of horses and other animals pollutes.

While sexual intercourse is certainly for reproduction, and the guarantee that the human race will continue, it has another purpose that is just as important. Notice in verse 19 above that the wife's breasts are to provide pleasure and satisfaction for her husband. Biologically, a woman's breasts are to provide milk to nourish her child. Yet, the breasts, as well sexual acts, are also meant for intimate pleasure, with husband and wife seeking to satisfy the other through physical intimacy. The Word of God also makes this a priority in marriage, even going so far as to say that each partner must seek to fully satisfy the other's sexual needs.

*1 Corinthians 7:3-5*

*3 Let the husband render to his wife the affection due her, and likewise also the wife to her husband.*

*4 The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. And likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does.*

*5 Do not deprive one another except with consent for a time, that you may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again so that Satan does not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.*

Verse 3 indicates that the husband and wife are under an obligation to satisfy the other physically. In verse 4, the Apostle Paul indicates that in marriage, the wife gives up the authority over her own sexuality to her husband. Likewise, he gives up authority over his sexuality to her. Everything sexual about the wife now belongs to her husband. Everything sexual about the man now belongs to his wife. This includes the various parts of the body, as well as the emotions and the mind. Jesus said: "You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart" (Matt. 5:27-28).

Notice also that a husband and wife are forbidden to "deprive one another." Paul forbid either husband or wife from withholding sex from the other for any reason except "with consent" in order to devote themselves to special fasting and prayer for a specific period of time. If the wife or husband, for whatever reason, felt the need to fast and pray for something specific, the other partner should consent to forgo sexual relations until the specified time. But, Paul also wrote that they should immediately resume their sexual activity once this previously agreed upon time elapsed. Why? Because depriving a spouse makes them susceptible to temptation.

This passage provides the only thing that should interfere with a husband's or wife's having their sexual needs met by their spouse. It is by consent for a stated purpose and duration. When a wife or husband withholds sex from their spouse, that is, they do not actively seek to satisfy their spouse's sexual needs, they are sinning. They are violating the "authority" over their bodies that they gave to their spouse when they entered the marriage covenant. Therefore, all forms of manipulation of a spouse by potentially withholding sex, in order to get what one wants, or to punish a spouse, are crimes against the spouse and against God. This leaves the spouse vulnerable to temptation and infidelity.

It is significant that the Apostle Paul used the word "affection" in this passage to describe physical intimacy. In this context, the term certainly refers to sexual intimacy. But, in general, "affection" refers to more subtle things as well, including loving physical touch, verbal communication of love, and acts of kindness and affection. All of these are the responsibility of both spouses. And when these are done from the heart and with fidelity, a man and wife become "one flesh" in an emotional and spiritual union that will provide a lifetime of happiness and fulfillment.