

# (Sex, Love & Marriage) 5. Two Shall Become One

by Zac Poonen

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of understanding God's design for marriage and living in accordance with His plan to experience a successful and fulfilling marriage.*

**Scripture:** Genesis 2:18, Psalm 78:5, Ecclesiastes 4:9, Matthew 19:3, 1 Corinthians 7:2, Ephesians 5:22, 1 Timothy 4:1, Hebrews 13:4, Revelation 19:7

**Topics:** "Christian Marriage", "Godly Relationships"

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## Description

Zac Poonen preaches on the beauty of unity in marriage, contrasting harmonious Christian couples with those who lack understanding and oneness, leading to misery. He emphasizes the importance of obeying God's Word in marriage to ensure success and happiness. Poonen delves into God's design for marriage, highlighting companionship, the establishment of a home, and sexual fulfillment as key purposes ordained by God. He also discusses the symbolism of marriage, drawing parallels between the husband-wife relationship and Christ-Church relationship, stressing the need for mutual love, respect, and self-sacrifice.

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## Transcript

One wonders whether there is anything more beautiful this side of Heaven, than the sight of a Christian husband and wife, different from each other in so many ways yet blending together to form one harmonious unit. One finds in such couples the true unity in diversity that God intended to be manifested through marriage. What is the secret of their oneness?

On the other hand, look at the thousand of couples who don't understand each other and who lack oneness even after years of married life. Many of these would, given the chance, gladly repent to a single life. Marriage which God ordained for man's happiness has turned out to be misery for them - a veritable hell on earth. They live together under the same roof, but as lonely individuals with nothing in common. They stick together only for the sake of their children, or perhaps because society would frown upon a breakdown of their marriage. Their life has become a hollow pretence. And yet almost all these couples commenced married life with apparent unity and love. Where did they fail?

Obeying the teaching of God's Word in relation to married life can make all the difference between a successful and unhappy marriage. No Christian should even begin to look for his life-partner until his mind had been reoriented to view marriage as God views it.

What was God's design and intention in ordaining marriage? Let us turn back to the record of the first marriage and see.

## In the Beginning

In Genesis 2:18-25, we have an account given us of the first wedding in the history of man. It was conducted by God Himself. This passage really gives an expanded description of what was briefly mentioned in Genesis 1:27.

God made man alone first; and it is significant to note that He who considered everything He created up to the sixth day as "good", (note the repetition of "saw that it was good" five times in Genesis 1), now states that it is "not good" for man to be alone (Genesis 2:18). As Milton said, "Loneliness was the first thing which God's eye named not good". God then proceeds to make the woman, to be Adam's wife and helper. After this is done, He now looks at His creation and uses the superlative "very good" to describe what He now sees (Genesis 1:31). A married couple made all that difference to God's creation!

## Purpose of Marriage

### 1. Companionship

The primary purpose of marriage is undoubtedly fellowship and companionship, as Genesis 2:18 makes clear. Eve was created to be Adam's constant companion. She was made to be his complement in every way - "a helper fitted to, corresponding to, similar to and suitable for him".

God wanted Adam and Eve to live in constant recognition of their need of each other, and together recognize their dependence upon Him. Each of them was to live for the other, and both were to live for God. Eve could not do without Adam's strength and Adam could not do without Eve's tenderness, and neither could do without God.

God intended them to be spiritually strong through such a fellowship. The Bible reminds us,

Two can accomplish more than twice as much as one, for the results can be much better. If one falls, the other pulls him up; but if a man falls when he is alone, he's in trouble....and one standing alone can be attacked and defeated but two can stand back-to-back and conquer (Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 - TLB).

The truth of this is clearly brought out by the fact that Satan decided to tempt Eve when she was alone and not when she was with Adam. Together, Adam and Eve could have repelled Satan's attack. Alone, each was weak. Together, their strength would have been (as the verse quoted above says) not just the strength of the one added to that of the other, but greatly multiplied. It is God's desire that every Christian married couple should manifest such spiritual strength.

But such strength can be experienced only when both husband and wife recognize their God-ordained position in relation to each other. Where a married couple do not live as companions and as "joint heirs of the grace of life" (1 Peter 3:7), they not only frustrate the main purpose of their marriage, but also leave the door wide open for Satan to enter in.

Perhaps you have heard the saying that God did not take Eve out of Adam's head, because He did not want her to rule over the man. Neither did He take her out of Adam's feet, because He did not want her to be man's slave. But He took her out of Adam's side, because He wanted her to be man's companion and

helper. Eve was taken out of Adam's side, from near his heart, so that he might remember to keep her always by his side (protecting her) and always near his heart (loving her tenderly and cherishing her). There is a great deal of truth in that symbolic teaching.

Genesis 2:21 states that after the rib was taken out of Adam, God closed up the flesh at that point. There is symbolic teaching here too. Adam had something missing within him when the rib was taken out. This was not evident outwardly for the flesh had been closed up. This symbolized a void in his inner life that could be filled only by Eve - for she was made from that rib. The Jewish rabbis say,

"Man is restless while he misses the rib that was taken out of his side, and woman is restless till she gets under the man's arm from whence she was taken".

Such is the relationship that God desires should exist between a husband and wife, and through such a fellowship alone will God's power be manifested and His purposes fulfilled.

In the New Testament, we find both the Lord Jesus and the Apostle Paul (inspired by the Holy Spirit) quoted this passage from Genesis 2 when referring to husband-wife relationships (Matthew 19:3-9; Ephesians 5:22-33). The teaching of the Genesis passage is therefore of great importance if we are to have a truly Christian concept of marriage.

## 2. Establishment of a Home

In Genesis 1:28, we see in God's first words to this newly-married couple, the second purpose of marriage. They were to be fruitful. The procreation of children and the establishment of a home was another reason why God instituted marriage. The sexual function was created by God primarily for this purpose.

The Bible places great emphasis on the home as a centre of Divine worship and service. The ordering of a home under the headship of God is a thing that brings much glory to Him. God gives us children not only to gladden our hearts but also that we might bring them up in His fear, so that they can be faithful witnesses to Him in their generation. This is stressed again and again in the Scriptures (Psalm 78:5-7).

To build a home that glorifies God and testifies to His faithfulness and His care is the calling of every Christian married couple. Children who are walking in the ways of the Lord are among the most effective sermons that a man can preach. The importance attached by God to this is evidenced by His blessing to Abraham for bringing up his children in godly ways and His cursing of Eli for not doing so (Genesis 18:19; 1 Samuel 3:13, 14).

The importance of this is taught in the New Testament too. In the Epistle to the Ephesians, after the mystery of the "Church" as being the Body of Christ is explained (Chapters 1 to 3), Paul goes on to say that the practical application of this truth should be seen in household relationships in the Christian home - between husband and wife, parents and children, master and servant (Chapters 5:22; 6:9). It is significant that Paul speaks about the home primarily and not about the local church. This would indicate that it is the testimony of the Christian home that is of primary importance in God's eyes. A local church can be strong only as the homes that constitute it are strong. When a spiritual atmosphere is lacking in these homes, it spells doom for the local church too.

It is only natural then to expect that Satan's fiercest attacks will be concentrated on this front. In the first home that God established, Satan brought jealousy, hatred and murder (Genesis 4:8). Ever since, he has

not spared a single godly home. Hence, in Ephesians, the section on spiritual warfare immediately follows the section dealing with the Christian home (Chapter 6:10-18). We are warned thereby that Satan will resist every effort to build a godly home, but we are also told of the armour with which God has provided us, to overcome every attack of the enemy.

The establishment of a home that glorifies God is undoubtedly one of the prime purposes of marriage.

### 3. Sexual Fulfilment

The command to be fruitful (in Genesis 1:28) carried with it the implication that Adam and Eve were to have sexual union. Marriage is the God-ordained means by which man and woman can find complete fulfilment of their sexual desires. This is the third purpose of marriage.

Sexual fulfilment in marriage involves far more than just physical satisfaction and pleasure. If that was all there was to it, then man would be no better than an animal. The physical aspect of sex is not despised in the Bible. We have already seen in Chapter One that sex as created by God is sacred and pure. But the sexual union of husband and wife must always be the symbolic climax and expression of a far deeper union that already exists between them in their inner selves. It should be the physical expression of the agape-love that they have for one another. The marriage-bed must be a sacred altar on which the husband and the wife, through sexual union, express their desire to give themselves in sacrificial service, each for the other, in every department of their life together.

The Bible glorifies sexual love in marriage. It has a whole book describing the story of two lovers - 'The Song of Solomon'. It speaks of the bridegroom rejoicing over the bride (Isaiah 62:5) and encourages husbands to find sexual satisfaction with their wives and to be always transported with delight in their love (Proverbs 5:18, 19; see also 1 Corinthians 7:5). There is nothing sinful about that - it is legitimate and right. It is because of the impurity always associated with sex in the minds of many that they are unable to understand how God could permit all this to be included in His Word.

To the pure (in heart and conscience) all things are pure, but to the defiled and corrupt and unbelieving, nothing is pure; their very mind and conscience are defiled and polluted (Titus 1:15).

If our minds are still carnal, we shall see impurity where none exists. We shall then consider even what God has written in His Word as impure! But as our minds are renewed by the Holy Spirit, we shall begin to view sex as God views it. We shall then recognize that sexual fulfilment in marriage is indeed holy and proper.

In the garden of Eden, before sin entered the world, Adam and Eve were to find sexual satisfaction in one another. With the advent of sin, the Bible tells us that marriage is now all the more necessary (perhaps this applies more to men), since an unmarried man is liable to fall easily into sexual sin (1 Corinthians 7:2). Instead of being perpetually tortured by unsatisfied desire, the Bible advises man to marry, for marriage is the only means that God has ordained whereby men and women may satisfy their sexual desires (1 Corinthians 7:9).

### Symbolism of Marriage

One of the most glorious revelations of Scripture is that the husband-wife relationship is symbolic of the relationship that exists between Christ and the Church (Ephesians 5:22-23).

Wives are told in this Ephesian passage to submit themselves to their husbands, because the husband is the God-appointed head of the wife. Wives are also commanded to be subject to their husbands in everything (as the Church should be to Christ), and to respect and reverence them too. Such submission may not be the accepted custom in our day, but it is nevertheless God's law. A home where this law is flouted will assuredly reap the consequences of disobedience in one way or another. Any Christian girl who has no intention of obeying these commands of God in married life should never get married at all. Far better for such a girl to remain unmarried, than to be married and then to live in perpetual disobedience to God's commands.

Lest any husband think that God's ordinance gives him license to make unreasonable demands upon his wife, the passage goes on to say that husbands should love their wives as Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for it. This implies that husbands are to love their wives with a self-sacrificing love, giving not just things, but themselves - their very lives - for the well being and happiness of their wives. As Christ loves the Church with an undying love, it is the husband's duty to love his wife unceasingly, regardless of whether or not he is loved in return. And remember that Christ's love for His disciples led Him to even wash their feet (John 13:1, 5). Husbands are further commanded in the same passage to love their wives as they love their own bodies. They are not deliberately to hurt or injure the feelings of their wives even as they would not deliberately hurt or injure their own bodies. They are to care for and protect their wives even as they would care for and protect their own bodies from harm and danger. A man who does not intend to follow such Scriptural teaching would best remain unmarried.

God's intention as revealed in this passage in Ephesians is that every Christian husband and wife should be in miniature a picture of Christ and the Church. Their life together should reveal the beauties of this relationship.

The fact that the command to be filled with the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 5:18) immediately precedes this section of husband-wife relationships would seem to indicate the fullness of the Spirit is to result primarily in Christ like behaviour in the home. Conversely, it would mean that in order to glorify God in married life, it is essential that we be filled with the Spirit.

Before looking for a life-partner, every Christian should ask himself whether he really desires to have such a home as described above. How can one who has no such longing expect God's guidance in marriage. But if this is really your ambition, you can be certain not only that God will lead you into marriage in His perfect will but also that He will strengthen you to build such a home.

## Celibacy

The Bible speaks not only of the glories of marriage but also of the advantages of celibacy. And so it is necessary (lest we be considered unbalanced!) to add a word here on the latter, before we close this chapter.

Paul speaks about celibacy in 1 Corinthians 7. Some have concluded from this chapter and from the Lord's words in Matthew 19:12 that the single state is more desirable and a more spiritual calling than the married one. But is this really what the Bible teaches?

We must bear in mind when considering 1 Corinthians 7, that Paul states four times in this chapter that he is giving his own opinion and that he is uncertain about the Lord's mind in relation to some of the points mentioned (see verses 6, 12, 25, 40). In any case, Paul makes it quite clear that even though he wished

that all men could be unmarried as he himself was, yet he recognizes that each person has his own particular gift from God (verse 7). It is significant that he uses the word "gift" here, implying thereby that there is no merit attached to celibacy - it being neither an achievement nor a reward but a gift. Jesus used the same word in Matthew 19:11 where He said that some were "given" this ability to live a celibate life. He made it very clear that only those who had received this ability from God were to live such a life (Matthew 19:12). There is no special virtue in remaining unmarried. It is undoubtedly God's calling for a few. But in the vast majority of cases He has planned that marriage should take place. If He wants you to be single He will tell you so. In the absence of such a specific command from God to your own heart personally, you should assume that God wants you to be married.

Those who feel that they should remain single must examine their reasons for choosing such a life. If celibacy is chosen because of a selfish desire to be alone, or because of superiority complex and scorn of the opposite sex, or because of circumstances where "what was desirable was not available and what was available was not desirable", then it is definitely wrong. If on the other hand, one desires to remain single so as to be more free to serve the Lord without distraction, then the motive at least is pure. But the calling for such a life must still come from God. It was thus with the Apostle Paul (1 Corinthians 7:32, 33; cf. 1 Corinthians 9:5).

That celibacy is more conducive to holy living is a wholly erroneous notion. An unmarried person may have more time than a married person for religious activity but such activity is not necessary for holiness. Enoch "walked [in habitual fellowship] with God [for] three hundred years, and had sons and daughters" (Genesis 5:22). He commenced walking with God only after he got married and had his first son. His walking with God did not hinder him from living a normal married life and having children. Neither did his having a family with its attendant responsibilities prevent him from walking with God.

Paul could not therefore have meant that all believers should be celibate. He himself has said elsewhere that those who preach celibacy as a rule of life are actually propagating a doctrine of the Devil (1 Timothy 4:1-3). The words of Paul in 1 Corinthians 7:25-28 need to be considered therefore in the proper context and setting. A.N. Triton has paraphrased the passage thus: "I will not lay down a rule, but these factors ought to be borne in mind. We are (in A.D. 55) in a period of distress and impending persecution. Every persecutor knows a man or woman who cannot be got at directly can often be got at through his family. Therefore, married people are in for a time of acute anxieties and troubles....I would spare you these and, therefore, advise against marriage, though please note that I do not say that marriage is sin. I only say that it is asking for trouble at this present time and I would spare you trouble".

This would be applicable even today for believers who are in countries where there is intense persecution, war or other similar distress.

In any case, we should not try to be what God never intended us to be. He has already planned a life for each of us - either single or married. Our duty is to find that perfect will of God and to walk in it.

In order to know God's perfect will, we must of necessity be willing to accept the calling of a single life - should God clearly call us to such a life. Where such a willingness is lacking, it reveals an area unyielded to the Lord, which in turn will prevent us from knowing God's will for our life.

Note the words of the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 7:29-36. A.N. Triton's paraphrase of the passage reads thus:

The opportunity for Christian work and witness is in any case short and limited. We must live as loose to the world....and our families as we possibly can. All these things are merely temporary and there is work of eternal value to do. But married people cannot shirk their home responsibilities and these are much more limiting than the unmarried often realize. If you are married you have important duties at home which you must discharge, and you cannot concentrate without distraction on the Lord's service. These are powerful reasons for avoiding marriage, at least while you are young (verse 36). Do consider the great privilege of Christian service which is open in special degree for the unmarried. If you would only postpone marriage until you feel that it will be rather late if you leave it any longer (verse 36), there are tremendous spheres of service open to you.... Now please realize that I do not say this at all in order to curtail your liberty (verse 35), but only to help you towards the best and, if circumstances or temperament lead you in another direction, there is nothing wrong in getting married. It is a good gift of God" (verse 36).

And so Paul, who began by saying that celibacy was a gift from God, ends up by saying that marriage too is a Divine gift. He was balanced in his outlook on these matters.

It is significant that immediately after the Lord spoke on celibacy, He took up little children in His hands and blessed them, so sanctioning marriage (Matthew 19:10-15). Such is the balance presented in the Scriptures. We must hold truth in the same balance.

#### Marriage Makes a Man Complete

It is in very rare cases indeed that God calls a man to a single life. God Himself has said that a man is, in a sense, complete only when he is married. Genesis 2:18 (as translated in the Berkeley Version) reads "And God said, 'It is not good that man should be alone. I will make him a suitable helper, completing him'".

It is significant too that the Bible begins with marriage (Genesis 2:18-25) and ends with a marriage (Revelation 19:7-9; 21:2-10), and that the first miracle that Jesus did was at a marriage (John 2:1-11).

And so, "let marriage be held in honour - esteemed worthy, precious - that is, of great price and especially dear" (Hebrews 13:4).

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