

Basic Principles of Marriage as designed by God

Introduction:

Almost every marriage starts out as a huge celebration. Together with their family and friends, each couple is full of hopes and dreams for their future life together. But the road to a happy marriage is far from easy. And as today's divorce statistics demonstrate all too well, many couples opt not to complete the journey. It would be easy to blame our high rate of marital failure on things like not spending enough quality time together, allowing bitterness and resentment to build in our hearts and failing to keep communication lines open. But I believe that in spite of these and many other reasons our marriages are falling apart because humankind have lost God's original design for marriage. Believe it, God's purpose for instituting marriage was good and it is still good. There are some basic principles or truth in God's word concerning marriage that humankind is gradually losing focus on. It is very important that we keep refresh our minds on some of these basic truth. This write-up seeks to help us understand the Biblical view of marriage by examining some basic truths or principles;

1. **God is the originator of marriage** – Genesis 1: 27 *“So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them”*

Marriage was established by God at the beginning of human history. And as the creator God has the right to tell us which principles should govern our marital relationships. Marriage is not a human institution devised in the dim past of human history as a convenient way to sort out social responsibilities. If marriage were a human invention, then different types of marriages (Polygamy, polyandry, Monogamy, same sex marriage, etc.) could have equal value. Some could legitimately argue that monogamy has served its purpose as the ideal norm of society and should now be replaced by serial monogamy, the taking of a succession of husbands and wives. In fact, for many today the latter better satisfies the quest for greater self-fulfillment and gratification.

We are living in an era where the laws of a state regarding marriage, divorce and remarriage IGNOR or even VIOLATE the teachings of the Bible. As Christians, one thing we must not lose sight of is the fact that "we must obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29).

2. God made male and female in His own image

No newspaper reporter was present to observe the creation of this universe and the celebration of the first marriage. God alone tells us how it all began in the brief account of Genesis 1-2. As the crown and culmination of His creative work, "God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them" (Gen 1:27). "Man" in the original Hebrew language is in the generic form inclusive of "male and female" and was fashioned in the image of God. This involves moral, rational and spiritual faculties rather than gender likeness, since God transcends male/female distinctions. It may also include the capacity of a man and a woman to experience a oneness of fellowship similar to the one existing in the Trinity. This also means that though men and women are sexually and functionally different, they enjoy equal dignity and importance before God.

God in His wisdom made one man and one woman as the original plan for the marriage relationship. At the beginning of human history God in His nature as the creator of everything could have made two or even more women for the first man (Adam) in order to have speed up the procreation process. But God in His wisdom made one male and one female as the original design for every marriage. There should be no compromise to this basic principle in the marriage relationship. To experience God kind of marriage relationship we need to follow God's design and it shall be well with us.

3. God's main purpose for Institution marriage was for Companionship.

In the creation account, God repeatedly recognizes that His creation was good (Gen 1:4,10,12,18,21,25,31). The only thing that God acknowledges to be "not good" is the incomplete creation of man as a single being: "Then God said: 'It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him'" (Gen 2:20).

At this point creation was still incomplete. With man alone there could be no procreation, and more important yet, no possibility for him to experience the kind of intimate relationship existing within the Godhead. To be human means more than to be male or female. It means to be able to enjoy an intimate rational and spiritual fellowship. To rectify the "not good" situation, God declares, "I will make him a helper fit for him" (Gen 2:18).

One thing that humankind ought to understand is that according to God's original plan marriage was not instituted solely for procreation even though that was part of the first blessings pronounced on the first husband and wife. Therefore childlessness in marriage should not be a yardstick to tire any marriage relationship apart. The book of Genesis gives us several examples of marriage couples who experienced the challenge of childlessness. We can talk of Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebecca, etc. but as the two (husband and wife) had faith and prayed to God, He intervened and listened to their plea. As one Dr. friend used to say, *"let us enjoy the marriage life without any pressure or anxiety on child bearing and the babies will flow"*. As we live together as husband and wife in cordial and lovely marriage relationship in fulfillment of God's original and ultimate purpose for instituting marriage, God Himself will step into your marriage and meet every challenge.

4. God designed woman to be man's suitable helper – for completeness

Eve was created to be Adam's other half approximating him in every point and making the marriage union a complete whole. She was not created to be man's slave, but rather his helper. The word "helper" ('ezer) is used in the Bible also for God as the helper of the needy (Ps 33:20; 146:5), thus it does not imply that woman is an inferior being. She is equal in nature and worth, reflecting the same divine image (Gen 1:27). Yet she is different in function, serving as a supportive helper.

Woman was created to be man's counterpart, agreeing with him mentally, physically and spiritually, making him a larger person than he would have been alone, bringing into his life a new feminine perspective he would not have known otherwise. The same holds true for man. He brings to his wife a masculine perspective that enlarges her life, making her a more complete person than she could be without him. Thus, a marriage union not only fills the need for companionship, but it enables a man and a woman to become fuller, more complete persons.

The way God chose to create the first bride is most significant. Unlike the rest of creation and of man himself, God formed Eve not from "the dust of the ground" (Gen 2:7) but from the very man who was to become her husband, by utilizing one of his ribs (Gen 2:21). The significance of the manner of Eve's creation, though not explicitly expressed, can hardly be missed. Eve was not made out of Adam's head to rule over him, nor out of his feet to be trampled upon by him, but out of his side to be his equal, under his arm to be protected, and near his heart to be loved.

As Adam beheld with sleepy eyes the most beautiful creature of God's creation, he declared with ecstatic excitement: "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called

Woman, because she was taken out of Man" (Gen 2:23). Adam's rejoicing was motivated by the discovery of the person who completed his incompleteness. His hunger for wholeness stemmed from the fact that God made him a male with the need for a female companion. God made Adam incomplete without Eve from the beginning.

This implies that every wife has a special purpose to fulfill in the life of her husband. She is to bring completeness in all corners of the husband's life; physically, psychologically, mentally, emotionally, sexually, etc. There is a specific and a special favor that should flow from every wife towards her husband. As it is written in the book of Proverbs 18:22, "He who finds a wife finds a good thing and obtains favour from the Lord". As a wife, you have a responsibility to add up to your husband's life, to make him increase, develop and feel fulfilled and complete in every aspect of his life. In essence, if you are married and your husband's life is deteriorating instead of it being improved, you need to check your life and find means of bringing that favour upon your husband's life.

Conclusion

The manner in which God created Adam and Eve reveals God's design that there should be male and female. Each of them needs the other for self-fulfillment. Each of them should accept his or her sexual and functional roles as given by God. This means that efforts to promote sexual or functional role interchangeability between men and women represent a violation of the role distinctions established by God at creation. True completeness and self-realization can be found not by transcending our sexual or functional roles but rather by fulfilling our different and yet complementary roles.