

Becoming One: God's Biblical Design for Marriage

Principle of First Love

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Becoming One: Principle of First Love

Genesis 1:24–28 NLT

Then God said, “Let the earth produce every sort of animal, each producing offspring of the same kind—livestock, small animals that scurry along the ground, and wild animals.” And that is what happened. God made all sorts of wild animals, livestock, and small animals, each able to produce offspring of the same kind. And God saw that it was good.

Then God said, “Let us make human beings in our image, to be like us. They will reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, the livestock, all the wild animals on the earth, and the small animals that scurry along the ground.”

So God [Elohim] created human beings [adam] in his own image. In the image of God he created them; male [zakhar] and female [neqevah] he created them.

Then God blessed them and said, “Be fruitful and multiply. Fill the earth and govern it. Reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, and all the animals that scurry along the ground.”

Enemy Lie #1: Humans are just animals who can think.

The Truth: Humanity is created in the Image of God – The Imago Dei.

1. It is not our strength nor intelligence that sets us apart from animals. It is our spiritual distinction as the Imago Dei – the Image of God.

Enemy Lie #2: Gender is a social construct, not a function of God's creation.

The Truth: God created us male and female – 2 genders, joined together in the sanctity of marriage.

Genesis 2:4–7 NLT

When the Lord God [Yahweh Elohim] made the earth and the heavens, neither wild plants nor grains were growing on the earth. For the Lord God had not yet sent rain to water the earth, and there were no people [adam] to cultivate the soil. Instead, springs came up from the ground and watered all the land. Then the Lord God formed the man [adam] from the dust of the ground. He breathed the breath of life into the man's [adam's] nostrils, and the man [adam] became a living person. ...

Genesis 2:18–24 NLT

Then the Lord God [Yahweh Elohim] said, “It is not good for the man [adam] to be alone. I will make a helper who is just right for him.” So the Lord God formed from the ground all the wild animals and all the birds of the sky. He brought them to the man [adam] to see what he would call them, and the man [adam] chose a name for each one. He [adam] gave names to all the livestock, all the birds of the sky, and all the wild animals. But still there was no helper just right for him.

So the Lord God [Yahweh Elohim] caused the man [adam] to fall into a deep sleep. While the man slept, the Lord God took out one of the man's ribs and closed up the opening. Then the Lord God made a woman [ishshah / wife] from the rib, and he brought her to the man [adam].

“At last!” the man exclaimed. “This one is bone from my bone, and flesh from my flesh! She will be called ‘woman,’ [ishshah / wife] because she was taken from ‘man.’ [ish / husband]”

This explains why a man [ish / husband] leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife [ishshah / wife], and the two are united into one.

Genesis 2:22–23 NLT

Then the Lord God made a woman [ishshah / wife] from the rib, and he brought her to the man [adam].

“At last!” the man exclaimed. “This one is bone from my bone, and flesh from my flesh! She will be called ‘woman,’ [ishshah / wife] because she was taken from ‘man.’ [ish / husband]”

Genesis 2:24 NLT

This explains why a man [ish / husband] leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife [ishshah / wife], and the two are united into one.

2. Marriage with a husband and a wife centered in God is a beautiful representation of the Godhead here on the earth.

Enemy Lie #3: Marriage is about getting our needs met.

The Truth: God created marriage with specific, spiritual roles, and the husband's role is to love his wife.

Ephesians 5:21–22,25 NLT

And further, submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. For wives, this means submit to your husbands as to the Lord. ... For husbands, this means love your wives, just as Christ loved the church.

Colossians 3:18–19 NLT

Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting for those who belong to the Lord. Husbands, love your wives and never treat them harshly.

3. This is the Principle of First Love: Marriages thrive when husbands actively love their wives.

Genesis 2:24 NLT

This explains why a man [ish / husband] leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife [ishshah / wife], and the two are united into one.

Small Group Guide: The Principle of First Love

Opening Question:

If your marriage were a movie, what would its title be—and why?
(Funny or serious! Just go with your first instinct!)

“Marriages thrive when husbands actively love their wives.”

God’s Design for Marriage

From the beginning, God created marriage to be more than cultural tradition or companionship. It’s a picture of unity, purpose, and love. Genesis 2:24 says a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh. This deep spiritual bond reflects God’s own nature and design.

In marriage, men and women are equal in value but distinct in role. God calls husbands to love their wives like Christ loved the church—sacrificially, humbly, and with strength. **This is the Principle of First Love:** when a husband actively loves his wife, he is walking in God’s order. When he doesn’t, even the love of a good wife can’t make the marriage thrive.

We see dysfunction in dating and marriage when men enter relationships looking to get something rather than give something.

Embracing Our Roles

In today’s culture, masculinity is often misunderstood or minimized. While unhealthy expressions of male behavior should be corrected, the solution isn’t to erase masculinity but rather to restore it to God’s design. A godly husband takes responsibility for love, peace, and unity in the home.

That means being the first to apologize, the first to listen, the first to seek understanding. It means honoring your wife’s voice, strength, and femininity, not as a threat but as a blessing. That’s what spiritual leadership looks like.

Wives are called to honor and support their husbands, encouraging them to walk in this role with grace and confidence. When both embrace their role with humility and purpose, the result is a life-giving, Christ-reflecting marriage.

How to Live It Out This Week

Husbands: Ask your wife what makes her feel most loved, and do it.

Wives: Affirm your husband when he leads with love, even in small ways

Husbands: Practice going first to serve, forgive, listen, and speak gently

Wives: Encourage your husband in his role! Speak life into him, support his efforts, and trust God's work in his growth.

For Discussion

1. What stood out to you about the idea of “first love”? How does it challenge or inspire you personally?
2. Why is a husband’s role to love first so foundational to a thriving marriage?
3. How do we guard against cultural ideas about gender that might weaken the unity God intends in marriage?