

On May 13, 1965, *Housekeeping Monthly* offered the following advice to women in what they called "The Good Wife's Guide":

Plan ahead, even the night before, to have a delicious dinner ready when your husband gets home from work. This is a way of letting him know you have been thinking about him and are concerned with his needs ... Prepare yourself. Put on some make-up, put a ribbon in your hair, and be fresh-looking. He's been with a lot of work-weary people. Prepare the children. Take a few minutes to wash them up, brush their hair, and change their clothes if needed. Remember, they are little treasures and he would like to see them playing the part ... Have a cool or warm drink for him, and arrange his pillow and take off his shoes ... Over the cooler months you should prepare and light a fire for him to unwind by. After all, catering to his comfort will bring you immense satisfaction ... Let him talk first. Remember that his topics of conversation are more important than yours ... Never complain if he comes home late or goes out to dinner or entertainment without you. Instead try to understand his world of strain and pressure and his need to relax.

Obviously... times have changed. The irony is that there really is some wisdom here... it's just buried under layers of stereotype... and love that only flows in one direction. ... There really can be something good and noble about doing these simple... everyday tasks for another person. It's just that it was never meant to come from just one spouse... (from wife to husband... or from woman to man.) In the New Testament... Paul tells us all to serve one another... (to defer to one another... to submit to one another.) ... He tells husbands to love their wives... to care for their wives as they care for themselves... and to lay down their lives for their wives.

The inspiration behind the advice given back in 1965... probably came from a passage in the Bible... such as the one we are going to look at this morning. ... Entire societies... since the days of creation... have been built on the principles from the verses we are about to study. But in many cases

... these verses may have been misunderstood... or carried beyond what their context can justify.

We have come this morning... in our study through Genesis... to the passage that describes the creation of women... and God's creation of marriage. Both appear in the same perspective... of what God saw was lacking in His creation.

In the Western world today there is much controversy and confusion over gender roles... marriage... and whether or not any of these are still needed. ... Does Genesis 2 offer information that will guide us through this maze? ... I believe that it does.

However... you know... as well as I do... that every position on this issue is capable of construing the Genesis text... any way that they want... so that it looks to support their particular position. ... So let me suggest a few ground rules... before we go any further in this controversial topic. ... We must make some methodological commitments... so that we will not be guilty of the same mistakes made by many before us... who dress up their own desires... so that they look like the Bible's teaching.

1. We must allow the text to pursue its own agenda, not force it to pursue ours.
2. We must be committed to the intention of the author rather than getting whatever mileage we can out of the words he used.
3. We must resist overinterpreting the text in order to derive the angle we are seeking.
4. We must be willing to have our minds changed by the text—that is at least part of the definition of submitting ourselves to the authority of the text.

5. We must be willing to accept the inevitable disappointment if the text does not address or solve the questions we would like answers to.

It will be hard for anyone **NOT** to notice... that the creation of woman is discussed in great detail in today's passage. ... Why? ... Why all the detail?

The primary reason seems to be this: to establish and set the relationship between man and woman forever. ... Man and woman are related to each other being bound together... and totally dependent upon each other. (One cannot exist without the other.) ... Man and woman need each other... (desperately need each other.) ... God needed to reveal this fact for **all** generations.

Also... God needed to reveal that man and woman are different persons... (distinct individuals.) ... Each has a distinctive role upon earth... and each was created for a different purpose. Each must fulfill his or her role in order to survive and to have a full and complete life. God needed to reveal this fact for **all** generations.

Now... let's go to the text...

Genesis 2:18

Wow! Six times... in chapter one... after God created something... He stood back and observed that it was "good."

V.4 - "God saw the light was good"

V.10 - God saw the separation of land and water was good

V.12 – plants that reproduced themselves... "good"

V.18 – lights in the heavens... “good”

V.21 – birds and sea creatures that reproduce themselves... “good”

V.25 – land animals that would also carry on for centuries... “good”

The verses surrounding each of these pronouncements... discusses the function of each of these created elements. Light functioned to separate night and day. Dry land gave a place for the plants and animals to live. The sun... moon... and stars provided a way to mark time and seasons... (etc.)

When something was "good"... it was functioning as God intended it to function. ... In chapter 1... the assessment that something was good indicated the successful completion of bringing order and function to the area under discussion.

And now we come to Genesis chapter two. God saw man... and for the first time... God said “NOT good...” ... There had not been a successful completion of bringing order and function to man.

In Genesis 1:28... we are told what the function is for man. But without a woman... man was without proper order and completely unable to function as God intended for him to function.

Genesis 1:28

Man needs a wife to populate the earth... to care for the earth’s plants and animals... which is part of the idea behind this word “subdue.” But after the fall of mankind in Genesis chapter three... to “subdue the earth” will also include “taking the earth back... for God’s intended purposes”... (“being God’s agents for taking the world back from Satan’s control...”) “The

Kingdom Strikes Back” is more than a title for a Stars Wars movie... it is man’s purpose in life.

But **none** of this is possible for man to do... alone. ... So God said, “*I will make a helper that is fit for him...*”

The root word for **helper** is “azar”... meaning to aid or assistance. Initially we might get the idea that man’s (so-called) “azar”... (his assistant) has an inferior rank. Isn’t that who a helper is...? Someone who is lesser...?

Well... lets see how this Hebrew word “azar” (the same word used in our passage for “helper”) is used in other places in the Old Testament.

(LISTEN!)... it is most often used with regard to the Lord. ... It is used of the Lord's aiding his people in the face of enemies (Ps. 20:23; 121:1–2; 124:8). Moses spoke of God as his “azar” (his “helper”) Who delivered him from Pharaoh (Exod 18:4), and it is often associated with “shield” in describing God's protective care of his people.

If we expand our investigation to the verbal forms of this word “azar”... we still find that it is primarily used for God... though there are a handful of occurrences where people help people. ... (LISTEN!) Nothing suggests a subservient status of the one helping; in fact... the opposite is more likely.

The fact that **God** is an “azar”... shows us that an “azar” is **not** a **demeaning** role in the least. ... There is nothing in the plan of God about superiority and inferiority... nothing about a superior or inferior rank for woman nor for man. ... The idea that woman is inferior to man... (a lesser being)... has **not** come from God... nor from His Word (the Holy Bible.) ... It has come from depraved... sinful humanity... and society.

And here is something else that has come from a depraved... sinful humanity... and society: “*Woman was created to assist man’s self-centered plans and desires – whatever he wants.*” Actually... she was not. She was created to be his “azar” (his helper)... in order to fulfill God’s great commission of Genesis 1:28... (take care of the earth... and take it back from Satan’s control.)

God looked at man and said “not good” because he could not function as God had designed... but also... what else does our verse say. ... He was “alone.” The first need of man mentioned in verse 18... was his need of a companion. ... God sees and cares. ... He saw Adam's need... and He sees our need. ... The picture is that of a fatherly care.

God sees our need... often... before we recognize it exists. (Can someone be lonely and not know that they are...?) Yes. ... I did not know that I was lonely... until my career (after I graduated from college)... took me to Denver Colorado. One of my favorite places to go... when I lived there was a city park... named Roman Park. From there I could see all the snow-capped peaks and beautiful sunsets over Denver.

I remember sitting in that park one evening... and thinking to myself... wow... this sure is pretty... but something is missing. Something is keeping me from enjoying it fully. (I did not hear God say it... but “not good” was the case here.) And then it dawned on me – I couldn’t enjoy it fully without having someone to share it with. My job was a good paying job... and I lived among such beauty. ... But for the first time in my life... I realized that I was lonely. (Not long after that... I quit my job... moved back to Fresno California... and God brought Patti along.)

After God looked at Adam and said “not good”... I believe that God needed to show Adam for the first time... that he was lonely. Adam lived in a beautiful place... and had... I am sure... what he thought was everything he needed. But he needed a companion... but first... God needed to show him that he did.

Genesis 2:19-20

After interacting with all the animals... Verse 20 ends by saying “there was not found a helper – ***fit for him***”. In the Hebrew this phrase (*kenegdo*) is very precise. ... It is literally “according to the opposite of him” and means that she corresponds perfectly to him. ... That was the reason for his naming the animals... (this was his need): to find an “azar” that was distinct... (different than he)... but was very well suited for him.

Picture Adam studying and observing the animals. As he researches their nature... to find just the right name to match their character... at some point it dawns upon him... that every living animal has a companion just like itself — ***except him***. ... He realizes that his creation is incomplete... God needs to create a companion for him.

This method of showing Adam his need for woman was bound to have a tremendous impact upon Adam. It was bound to make Adam love and appreciate his dear wife far more... than if God had created her at the same time he was created. ... When God does created Eve... Adam would be longing for her... longing with an intense desire. ... He knew how desperately he needed a companion... who was just like himself... a companion with his very own nature.

There is a close association between man and animal... but there is also a vast difference between the two. ... Man and animal can (to some degree)... communicate... play together... and enjoy each other. ... But in every case —without exception — man has to lower himself... and meet the animal on its level. ... Never can the animal raise itself... and meet man on his level. ... This is what Adam saw and sensed ever so deeply. There was no creature capable of being a companion to him... because there were none that were his equal. Adam needed a mate who would be equal... in person and nature with him.

God deliberately awakened in Adam this sense of need... ... You know... God never awakens a desire... that He can not... and will not... satisfy... in His own good time and way. ... God has made all of us with a desire for companionship. Our problem is that... (too often)... we are so impatient and impulsive. ... Man... often (in trying to answer his own need)... settles for something that is not fit for us... like having sex outside of marriage... or with members of the same gender. (Members of the same gender do not fit this Hebrew concept of “kenegdo” – which... again... was what Adam could not find among the animals. It means opposite but corresponding perfectly... and was only found when God created Eve for him.)

Genesis 2:21-22

It should be noted that the word translated "rib" is not used as only a bone that helps protect our vital organs. Everywhere else in the Old Testament... it is usually used to refer to the side of a building or room. In all of the ancient Hebrew literature... it is rarely used to refer only to a bone. ... It indicates the area of the ribs... and also includes the flesh and muscle as

well. This makes more sense when Adam first sees Eve and says that she is “*bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh...*” ... It is more likely that verses 21 and 22 portray God as taking a handful (?) of bone and flesh out of Adam’s side to use in the construction of Eve.

Almost every commentary that I read this week... all quoted Matthew Henry... after these verses. Henry quaintly says that the woman was taken from Adam's *side* — *not* from his head to rule over him... not from his feet to be trampled on... but from his side to be equal with him... from under his arm to be protected... from close to his heart to be loved.

Genesis 2:23

When Adam saw his bride, he burst into joyful praise (Gen. 2:23), as though he were saying, "At last I have a suitable companion!"

The exuberant nature of his response is indicated by the Hebrew wording *zō't hap pa'am*, rendered “*This at last is*” ... or “*At last, here is one of my own kind.*” ... “*Yes! Finally... after all my researching the animals!*”

From this story... it is clear that the male-female concept of humanity was not an afterthought... but was God's plan from the start. ... The plan for woman's creation (after man had already existed) ... was not just an afterthought... was not an inferior plan... was not of less importance... was not given less attention and thought than the creation of man.

On the contrary... the very opposite was true. This passage shows that great attention and thought were given to the creation of woman. The plan for woman's creation was done... so that it would have the greatest impact... rather than creating them both at the same time.

By naming her woman (*’iššâ* in the Hebrew)... he does a sound play on *’iš* (which is Hebrew for “man”) LOOK AT THIS... his name (*’iš*) is embedded inside of hers *’iššâ*.) ... and this word picture is also heard in English “man” and “woman.” ... Just as Adam’s side was embedded into hers... *’iš* is inside *’iššâ* This explains why Adam said in verse 23 “she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of man...”

The husband is to be the head of the home. ... Adam did come before Eve... and she was created as his helper. When we get to chapter three in Genesis... we will see that it was God’s blueprint for man to be the leader... in serving God’s function for them. (God will quiz Adam first... for their collective sin. He was the responsible one for their actions in the Garden.) ... And the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 11:8 appeals to the fact that man was not made from woman... but woman was made from man... to help establish that man is to be the leader.

Also... in the next chapter of Genesis... when we come to God’s pronouncement of punishment for their sin... Look what He says to the woman...

Genesis 3:16

What does “*your desire shall be for your husband*” mean. The desire for your husband means... wives will desire their husband’s God-given role to lead. ... “You will desire to lead your husbands... but he shall rule over you...” ... The constant struggle that has affected so many Christian homes (and churches) – stems from the curse... after Adam and Eve sinned. Wives will try to take charge as the leader... (no longer - the well suited “azar” for her husband)... and sometimes when a wife becomes

good enough at usurping God's authority structure for the home... they become emboldened enough to try to usurp God-given roles of authority in the church... as well. (But we are a few sermons away from this section of Genesis. For now... I want to make clear from our passage... that God has an order of authority... that goes all the way back to the creation of woman. It is God's blueprint for happiness and blessing. Ignoring it... will always bring the opposite.)

Now... turning back to Genesis chapter 2... God elicited a strong desire in Adam for a suitable companion... because man would not be able to function as God intended. Then God created Eve from Adam's side... and Adam said "Wow!... Yes!... Finally!..."

But in creating the female gender for man... mankind was still not complete. Something else was necessary in order to complete the Great commission of Genesis 1:28. Taking care of the earth... and taking back the earth from Satan's domination... will work best when there is a very special relationship of strong bonding... between men and women. ... The next thing that God needed to create was something that would bind men and women into such an exclusive relationship... that it would be more binding than any other relationship in their life.

Genesis 2:24

Genesis 2:24 defines marriage for us.

God created marriage. It was His idea... And Oh! Let me tell you... Marriage = far more than "just a piece of paper." Marriage is all a part of obeying our commission given to us by God in Genesis 1:28. ...

I do not do a lot of marriage counseling... but over the years... I have done a fair share. Now... I might sound overly simplistic... but I think God has allowed me to observe a consistent truth. ... I have never encountered a marital problem or difficulty... that does not have its roots deeply embedded in a violation of God's definition in Genesis 2:24 of what marriage is. God says marriage must include three elements... and when one or more of these elements are ignored or minimized... marital difficulty or breakdown occurs.

Marriage consists of "leaving"... "cleaving"... and "becoming one"... and I feel confident enough to stand up here and tell you that every problem... in every marriage... has its roots right here in these three components of marriage.

First... there must be a leaving. ... The significance of the language "leave" is that marriage involves a new pledge to a spouse... in which all former commitments (including the commitment to one's parents) are secondary... (they are now lesser commitments.) Marriage requires a new priority by the bride and groom... where the obligations to one's spouse... even supersede their parental loyalties. ... The union between husband and wife is to be the primary... and the strongest relationship between anyone who is married.

Marriages fall apart... whenever they let other relationships become more important... (work relationships... childhood friends... a brother or sister... parent or grandparent... social media relationships... fellow hobby enthusiasts... fraternal organization members... even relationships at church.) If you are married... and you do not consider your spouse to be

the priority of all your (human) ties and relationships... then you will have... or already have major problems. Leave mother and father – or anything else that has equal or greater importance than your relationship to your spouse.

Second... God's definition of marriage... is that there must be "cleaving." This is very active – never passive. There is no "auto-pilot" for marriage... where you don't have to put a lot of energy into steering it in the right direction and to maintain the right altitude. Husbands or wives... who stop putting much energy into preserving and bettering their relationship... are not cleaving.

Cleaving involves actively thanking God for your spouse and praying with them every day. It means working hard to actively share life together... (not being content to let them have their life – and you have yours.) It means being transparent about your life and sharing deeply. It means doing things that have special meaning – together.

And cleaving involves actively rejecting an impure thought-life... as though there really is something better than what you have. There isn't! Don't allow wrong images and lustful thoughts to linger in your mind. Once you recognize that a wrong thought exists – take that thought captive to the obedience of Christ.

Third... God's definition of marriage... is that there must be the act of "becoming one flesh" with each other. This is a metaphor taken from the verse just prior... (verse 23)... when the man's flesh and bone entered her and became part of the woman.

It symbolizes the unique relationship – unlike any relationship that they are to have with anyone else. ... Exclusively he is to be hers and she is to be his — so much so that they are as one flesh... as one person. ... Simply stated... there is to be a physical intimacy... and a spiritual union... so binding... that they become as one person in body... mind... and spirit.

Marriages fall apart when such intimacy is broken with others... or is expressed too soon. I have counselled a lot of couples who expressed this intimacy with each other... and then later married one another. Even this creates problems in the marriage. It has negative consequences because it is not God's design for His greatest blessing.

Genesis 2:25

Verse 25 tells us that when we do things God's way... there is no shame.

This morning... we have been looking at God's design for men and women to fulfill God's commission in Genesis 1:28 – together. I even mentioned that it is fulfilled better when a husband and wife seek to fulfill it together... as one.

But what about someone... to whom God has never brought a life partner...? Are they less able to complete God's plan...? ... To answer this... I need to briefly turn your attention to the New Testament.

As with other principles in the Old Testament... there seems to be an important redemptive historical shift that takes place... at the coming of Christ. (We call this progressive revelation. The Bible from Genesis to Revelation... reveals more and more... and it clarifies.)

Jesus Himself affirms God's original design of marriage in Matthew 19:4-6 and affirms the importance of that relationship... by stating that a divorce should not be granted except for sexual immorality (19:9). ... The disciples are surprised by the strictness of Jesus' words. ... (They were used to the granting of easy divorce whenever a Jewish man wanted one.)

In response to Jesus... His disciples assert that if that is the case... it is better not to marry (19:10). ... Jesus uses their response to teach further on the fact... that 'not marrying'... may now be an option... for the sake of the kingdom of heaven (19:11-12). ... In other words... there may be situations where singleness is better because it enables a person to focus all his or her energy on serving Christ... without worrying about the responsibilities that come with marriage. (The Apostle Paul also wrote this in 1 Cor. 7:32-35).

Jesus Himself never married. ... Although marriage is still important... singleness is an option... and those who are single should not be made to feel like second-class citizens in the kingdom of God.

And if you are single... desiring a life-partner... let me repeat something that I said earlier. God never awakens a desire... that He cannot... and will not... satisfy... in His own good time and way. Wait for His perfect fit.

Lastly... If you are married or planning to be married... are you willing to keep the commitment that makes the two of you one? ... The goal in marriage should be more than friendship... It should be oneness... in order to better take care of God's earth... and to take back the earth from Satan's control.