

Date : 5 January 2025

Theme : Building a strong foundation for the family

Topic : God's design for marriage

Key Passage: Genesis 2:18-24

Key Verse : That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh. Genesis 2:24

Marital problems are on the rise, with divorce rates climbing. Many are choosing single life to avoid the responsibilities of marriage. Some forgo having children in favour of pets, while others cohabit to "test" compatibility or avoid formal commitments due to fear of failure. When marriages break up, some couples seek counselling but find no lasting solution, as their problems stem from a lack of involvement with God. Failing to recognize marriage as God designed leads people to redefine it according to their own desires. It shifts from a lifelong commitment to a temporary contract, marked by cohabitation before marriage, self-gratification, and the acceptance of same-sex marriage. We need to go back to the very beginning to understand the designer's purpose of marriage.

1) God is the designer of marriage *Genesis 2:24*

That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh.

a) God created the woman for Adam. 'It is not good for the man to be alone' *Genesis 2:18*

*... He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man *Genesis 2:22.**

- God's design for marriage is always between a man and a woman.
- He brought the woman to Adam. A prudent wife is from the Lord. *Proverbs 19:14.*
- Since God instituted marriage, He knows exactly how it should function successfully.
- Couples cannot experience true joy and fulfilment in their relationship when they stray from His design.

b) God's purpose for marriage

i. Companionship *Genesis 2:18*

God saw Adam was alone and created Eve.

Adam needed a companion to share his life and overcome loneliness.

ii. To provide help to one another

The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.

*... I will make a helper suitable for him. *Genesis 2:15, 18**

'Suitable helper' is not sexism. It is:

- Equality in partnership: Standing as equal partners, neither inferior nor superior. The husband and wife help each other with equal standing but different roles. The wife is not a doormat; both contribute equally in unique ways. A spouse can support each other by sharing household responsibilities.
For instance, one spouse might cook meals while the other handles the cleaning up, fostering a well-functioning home and reflecting mutual support in marriage.
- Complementary - strength, abilities and roles: Eve was created to complement and complete what Adam lacked. The husband may excel in planning, while the wife is better at creative problem-solving. Together, they complement each other, balancing structure and flexibility for efficient and harmonious task management.

iii. Family and multiplication *Genesis 1:28*

Through marriage, humanity fulfils God's command to "*be fruitful and multiply*".

- Marriage provides a framework for procreation that honors God's design for love and responsibility. It creates a stable, loving environment for raising godly children, fosters emotional and spiritual bonds, promote faith and responsible stewardship.

iv. Marriage is a picture of Christ's love and a catalyst for personal growth

Marriage mirrors the sacrificial love of Christ for the Church and fosters a relationship that encourages personal growth. Just as Christ's love for the Church calls for humility, sacrifice, and unconditional commitment, marriage challenges individuals to grow in patience, forgiveness, and selflessness.

2) 3 keys to a successful marriage:

a) Marriage must be God-centred *Ecclesiastes 4:12; Malachi 2:14-16*

- Marriage is a covenant relationship governed by faithfulness.
- Marriage is a solemn promise before God, not just a legal agreement registered at ROM.
- Both partners must first individually pledge allegiance and obedience to God before fully committing to each other. A strong marriage begins with both individuals aligning their hearts with God's will, allowing His guidance, love, and grace to shape their relationship.
- The **Marriage Covenant Triangle** illustrates this dynamic, with God at the top, and each partner drawing closer to one another as they grow closer to Him.

b) Priority ("*leave*") *Genesis 2:24*

- Establishing a new relationship in marriage.
Creating a new family identity involves setting new priorities, where couples make decisions together, independent of their parents, in all areas of life, including financial independence. The bond between husband and wife must take precedence over all other family ties, as well as career, friendships, and external influences.

c) Becoming One ("*one flesh*")

*... be **united** to his wife, and they shall become **one flesh*** *Genesis 2:24*

Marriage is a sacred union, a lifelong covenant that forms an unbreakable bond.

Oneness covers 3 conditions:

I) Exclusivity in intimacy (physical union)

The sexual relationship within marriage is exclusively reserved for one's spouse. It reflects **faithfulness** through devotion and loyalty, even in the face of life's temptations. This bond requires ongoing effort from both partners to maintain loyalty and attachment. *Eg: It would not be appropriate for a woman to kiss a male colleague, even out of appreciation, as it violates the boundaries of exclusivity in the marital relationship*

II) Trust (emotional union)

A strong marriage is built on trust. **Trust** is even more important than love because it forms the foundation of a lasting relationship. Without trust, love cannot fully grow. Trust creates **security**, fosters **intimacy and transparency** and strengthens the **lifelong** commitment to stay together through all of life's challenges, including illnesses. Both partners rely on each other for emotional support, and their lives, decisions, and well-being are deeply intertwined as they share burdens, joys, and responsibilities. *Eg: As a married couple, it is wrong to share intimate feelings or personal relationship problems with someone of the opposite sex other than your spouse.*

III) Faith (spiritual union)

Both spouses are united in their faith in God, praying together and seeking His guidance in every decision. They align their **values and obedience** with biblical principles, from raising children to managing finances, ensuring their marriage is rooted in faith and God's will. This ongoing spiritual bond requires effort from both partners to remain united in their faith and commitment to God's guidance.

Applications:1) For the singles:

How would you choose your life partner based on God's design for marriage?

2) For married couples:

Examine the strengths and weaknesses in your marriage and discuss areas where you both can intentionally work together to grow stronger.