

CONTENTS

Introduction	7
1. Transcendence: The Origin of Marriage	11
2. Hierarchy: The Order of Marriage	37
3. Ethics: The Operation of Marriage	57
Appendix: The Urban Alternative	83
Notes	87

TRANSCENDENCE: THE ORIGIN OF MARRIAGE

For far too many people, the subject of marriage is like a three-ring circus. First, there is the engagement ring. Next comes the wedding ring. Then, there is suffering.

One lady said that she got married because she was looking for the ideal but it quickly turned into an ordeal, and now she wants a new deal. One man said that he and his wife were happy for twenty years . . . and then they got married.

Many people today are disappointed with marriage. They wake up one morning only to discover that the reality they live in looms far from what they had once dreamt or imagined. Because of this, some are getting out of marriage almost as quickly as they got into it.

On top of that, the breakup of a marriage these days

doesn't seem to carry the same gravity that it did in the past. So-called "no-fault" divorces offer the option of an amicable split. My question is, if things are so amicable, then why not stay married? What we are experiencing today is the ending of marriages without even a hint of remorse.

It reminds me of a guy who went to the Super Bowl. The stadium was packed, but the seat next to him sat empty. The man behind him questioned him about the empty seat. He answered, "That seat was for my wife. She would have been here, but she died."

The other man offered his condolences and asked him if he didn't have a friend that he could have asked to come with him rather than let the seat remain empty. The man replied, "I do, but all my friends said they wanted to go to the funeral instead."

Now, I realize I'm making light of a weighty subject, but I'm doing so to illustrate how the seriousness of the wedding vows seems to no longer be honored. Statistics remind us what we already know, either from personal experience or from our friends, and that is that over 50 percent of all marriages will end in divorce. Over half of all promises made that "until death do us part" get broken.

Because of this, what I would like to examine is the nature of the agreement we make when we get married. If we do not understand this agreement, then we will not be prone to protect it. What's even worse is that neither will we be apt to benefit from it.

One day a boy lost one of his contact lenses. He

spent a significant amount of time trying to locate it, but he couldn't. Eventually, he told his mom. The boy's mom began looking for the contact lens with him and found it in only a matter of minutes. The boy asked, "How could you find that contact lens in just a few minutes when I must have looked for twenty minutes?"

The mom said, "That's easy. You didn't find it because you were looking for a contact lens. I found it because I was looking for two hundred and fifty dollars."

It all depends on how you view it.

Our marriages today are deteriorating at such a high rate, not because we no longer get along, but because we have lost sight of the purpose and prosperity of the marriage covenant.

Most people today view marriage as a means of looking for love, happiness, and fulfillment. Make no mistake about it, those things are important. Those things are critical. They are just not the most important, or the most critical. Yet because we have made second things first, as important as second things are, we are having trouble finding anything at all.

Marriage is a covenant. It is a covenantal union designed to strengthen the capability of each partner to carry out the plan of God in their lives. Marriage matters.

GOD'S DESCRIPTION OF MARRIAGE

Let's begin by looking at Malachi. In the book of Malachi, God is complaining against His people because

they have wandered away from Him. They have taken a detour from God's plan for their lives.

One of God's complaints is found in chapter 2, verses 13 and 14. We read,

This is another thing you do: you cover the altar of the Lord with tears, with weeping and with groaning, because He no longer regards the offering or accepts it with favor from your hand. Yet you say, "For what reason?" Because the Lord has been a witness between you and the wife of your youth, against whom you have dealt treacherously, though she is your companion and your wife by covenant.

Did you catch that? The passage specifically identifies marriage as a "covenant." The term "covenant" used to be regularly attached to the concept of marriage. The word has gotten lost in our contemporary language, but it is the biblical description of marriage used throughout Scripture.

The problems come when we don't realize that marriage *is* a covenant, nor do we know what a covenant is. Because if we do not know what a covenant is, then we do not know what we are supposed to have, develop, or protect over time. It's like trying to hit a bull's-eye without a target.

For most people, a covenant is simply some sort of formal contractual arrangement. While this is true about the nature of a covenant, a covenant is also much more

than that. In the Bible, a covenant is a spiritually binding relationship between God and His people inclusive of certain agreements, conditions, benefits, and effects.

Whenever God wanted to formalize His relationship with His people, He would establish a covenant. There are a number of these agreements in the Bible such as the Abrahamic covenant, the Mosaic covenant, the Davidic covenant, and the new covenant. These are formal arrangements that are spiritually binding in a legal capacity between God and His people.

Marriage is another form of a covenant that God has established.

What we are going to do throughout this and the remaining chapters is to delve deeper into the purpose and practical aspects of marriage, as well as the three fundamental facets that make up a covenant: transcendence, hierarchy, and ethics.

If you can grab, own, and apply these truths in your life, you will have a God-centered perspective on marriage that can impact not only the rest of your life but future generations to come.

MARRIAGE IS A
COVENANTAL
UNION DESIGNED
TO STRENGTHEN
THE CAPABILITY OF
EACH PARTNER TO
CARRY OUT THE
PLAN OF GOD IN
THEIR LIVES.

FIRST COVENANT FACET: TRANSCENDENCE

The first facet of a covenant is a big theological word called *transcendence*. (We'll cover the other two facets, hierarchy and ethics, in later chapters.) Transcendence simply means that God is in charge. Covenants are both initiated and ruled by God.

Now, that might seem like an obvious statement and one that we don't need to spend too much time on, but transcendence is a key principle in a covenant. In order for a covenant to successfully function, carrying with it both the benefits and security that a covenant supplies, it has to be set up according to God's expectations and regulations.

Covenants can never operate without the ongoing involvement of God. Biblical, spiritual, and theological covenants assume God's integration into every aspect of the covenantal relationship in order for that covenant to work.

When the practical realities of God are dismissed from the marital covenantal relationship, it becomes an invitation to the Devil to create havoc in the home. This happens because there has been a departure from transcendence.

Since God is ultimately in charge of the covenant of marriage, the first place to look to gain insight into the makings of a purposeful marriage is God's viewpoint on marriage.

GOD'S PERSPECTIVE ON MARRIAGE

Most people learn about marriage from an illegitimate source. They learn about marriage from the television, their friends, or the home that they grew up in. If you grew up in a functioning home, then that would be fine. But many did not, so the home—along with the media and friends—often merge together to form a distorted perspective on the covenant of marriage.

Without a divine frame of reference, we will stray from God's formula for a healthy, productive relationship. What is this divine frame of reference? God, as far back as in the garden of Eden, gave us His perspective through the very first marriage.

One of the rules of studying the Bible is called the Law of First Mention. The Law of First Mention simply states that if you want to see what God says about a matter, look at the first time He brings it up. You do this because the first time He brings it up will typically tell you how He thinks about it. Everything else will build on that first time. While it may add to it or expand it, it doesn't cancel out His first mention unless He says that it does at a later point.

Marriage starts off in the book of Genesis. Before there was sin, there was marriage. Marriage was put in a sinless environment created by God. It was put there for a purpose, which we will discover as we dig deeper into the opening chapters.

"LET THEM RULE"

Looking at the book of Genesis in chapter 1, we read that God has been very active creating many different things. He has created the heavens and the earth in such a way that they are functional, vibrant, and pulsating with life.

On the fifth day, God formed the creatures that would live upon the earth. Then on the sixth day, He came to the paramount of His creation purposes—the creation of mankind.

Let's look at a few verses in Genesis chapter 1. We read,

Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. God blessed them; and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth." (vv. 26–28)

A number of things come out in verse 26. First, we see the word "Us" referring to the Triune God: Father, Son, and Spirit. The Trinity consists of three individual and unique persons who make up the One unified reality of

the Godhead. Secondly, we see the commission of mankind, which is to bear this Trinitarian image of God. An image is simply a mirror—a reflection. God created humanity (body, soul, and spirit) to mirror Him, and then He established them in the divine institution called family to reproduce His image.

Therefore, the goal of people in general and the family in particular is to mirror God in the visible realm predicated on His reality in the invisible. The family is to be the visible photograph of God Himself.

Notice also in verse 26 that we read, "God said . . ."

In verse 27, we see that "God created . . ."

And in verse 28, we find that "God blessed . . ." God said it. God created it. Then God blessed it. Don't lose sight of that, because it demonstrates that the issuance of the marriage covenant comes directly from God.

The first thing God said was that mankind will be made in "Our image, according to Our likeness, and let them rule . . ." Be careful not to skim over that too quickly.

Here we have God creating man, male and female, and after doing so, He gives them a common goal. He says your common goal is to exercise dominion over the world in which I have placed you.

WITHOUT A DIVINE
FRAME OF
REFERENCE, WE
WILL STRAY FROM
GOD'S FORMULA
FOR A HEALTHY,
PRODUCTIVE
RELATIONSHIP.

God says that mankind will mirror His image on earth, but then He says that there will be more than that for them. He is going to "let them rule." He is going to let humanity exercise dominion and authority.

What we see in verse 26 is God delegating to mankind the full responsibility for managing His earthly creation. God decides to indirectly control the affairs of earth by letting mankind exercise direct dominion. He has placed an agent on earth to serve as His representative to carry out in history His desires from eternity.

Not only does God proffer the delegation to rule, He also grants the freedom to rule, the responsibility to rule, and the right to rule on His behalf as owner. But what He does not do is *force* man to rule. He says, "Let them rule." He does not say He is going to *make* them rule.

What that means is that you can have a happy marriage or a miserable marriage depending on whether your rule is reflecting His image. God isn't going to make you rule. He isn't going to make you have a happy marriage. He sets up the fundamentals of a covenant, and gives you the option of utilizing them.

Oftentimes, the well-being of the home is determined by whether the man is reflecting God's image in his role as a kingdom man, or the woman is reflecting Him in her role as a kingdom woman. Once that mirror gets broken, the reflection that is supposed to happen in the relationship gets broken with it. Virtually every time there is a marital breakdown, it is because one or both parties are functioning outside of the covenantal fundamental of tran-

scendence. They are functioning with a broken mirror.

God says, "I am in charge. I have made man in My own image. And now I am letting him call the shots within the parameters I have declared." That is my Evans translation of this passage in Genesis.

But don't confuse what God is saying. God is not giving up ownership of anything by relegating rulership. Psalm 24 tells us plainly, "The earth is the Lord's, and all it contains, the world, and those who dwell in it" (v. 1). God still claims ownership. But while He claims ownership, He also grants freedom.

This truth explains a lot of things that people often ask about. Things like, "If God *is* God, then how did this terrible thing happen?" Or, "Why did that bad thing happen?" Or, "How is there chaos if God is a God of order?"

Things happen and there is chaos because God has said, "Let them rule." God has given man the freedom, and responsibility, to rule—for good or for bad, for yes or for no, and for positive or for negative impact.

What Satan tries to get us to do is to either relinquish our rule by handing it over to him through deceiving us into believing that he has authority, or he tries to get us to rule poorly based on our own judgments and distorted views. It isn't until we rule with wisdom under the transcendence of God that we will become the rulers He intended. It is then that we enter into the complete realization of God's design for our lives.

PARAMETERS FOR RULING

God reigns over all, but He has delegated dominion at this unique juncture in history when mankind lives on the earth. We see this in the book of Psalms. Psalm 115 says, "The heavens are the heavens of the Lord, but the earth He has given to the sons of men" (v.16).

What this means is that God has decided to respect your decisions, and that much of His action will be determined by your action. Most people are sitting around waiting on God to act, but God is often waiting on man to act. While He has maintained a base of sovereign boundaries, a sphere He will not allow men to trespass on, He has simultaneously opened up a field where we get to call the plays, leaving Him to respond accordingly.

He has not relinquished His sovereignty, but He has given us an enormous slice of dominion within it. To gain a better understanding of the purpose of our dominion, let's look at the historical context within which marriage was first placed.

When Satan rebelled, God set forth to create the human race to rule over His created order. We see this in Psalm 8:

When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers,
The moon and the stars, which You have ordained;
What is man that You take thought of him,
And the son of man, that You care for him?
Yet You have made him a little lower than God,
And You crown him with glory and majesty!

You make him to rule over the works of Your hands;
You have put all things under his feet. (vv. 3–6)

This is why, when God created Adam and Eve, He said, “Let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth” (Genesis 1:26). Then God told them to “subdue” the earth (v. 28).

In other words, it was impossible that God would not have a kingdom that would rule over and defeat the kingdom of Satan. When Jesus Christ sets up His millennial kingdom, it will be the final, triumphant declaration of God’s glory. Satan will then be chained up during that time to demonstrate his utter defeat and judgment (see Revelation 20:1–3).

Yet for now, God has created you and me to harness, and rule, a part of His creation. Every person was created with that divine intent.

Why is it important for you to grasp the unfolding of God’s kingdom? Because when God established the first marriage and said, “Let them rule,” He stated that He would not rule independently of man—that mankind’s decisions would now carry weight regarding what He did or did not do. And He did this for one reason—to demonstrate to the Devil that He could do more through a lesser creature in manifesting His glory than through the once shining star.

See, numbers of people think that there is a battle going on between God and the Devil. There is no battle

going on between God and the Devil. If there were, it wouldn't last long. That's like saying, "Tony Evans and Mike Tyson are fighting." Sure, we might both climb into the ring together to duke it out, but I would be no match for Mike.

Satan, a created creature, is no match for the omnipotent Creator. That's not even a fight. But what God did do was create an inferior creature—humanity (Psalm 8:5), who are not even competition with Satan or his demons on our own—to demonstrate that in this spiritual battle, even the inferior creature can win when he or she operates according to God's governance, authority, and kingdom agenda. You and I were cast in a cosmic conflict to manifest God's rule in history for the advancement of His kingdom and the reflection of His glory, and one realm in which this is done is in the partnership of marriage.

EAT FREELY

Leaving chapter 1 and moving into chapter 2 of Genesis, we discover more about this rule: "The Lord God commanded the man, saying, 'From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die'" (Genesis 2:16–17).

I want you to notice what God says we *can* have in this passage first. God says that from "any tree of the garden" we may freely eat. What we often do, and what legalism often does, is look at that passage, or passages similar to it, and focus on the thing that we cannot have.

We do this, all the while ignoring the hundreds of things God has just told us are free for us to enjoy.

Whenever our list of "can't haves" or "can't do's" exceeds our list of what we are free to do, then we have gone far beyond what Scripture is saying. The essence of the Christian life should be measured by what you get to enjoy, not by what you are denied.

God says, "From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat . . ." In other words, you are free to enjoy everything God has to offer you, other than the one thing that will open up to you the opportunity to determine for yourself what is good or bad, right or wrong. That rule is not an option. We are to live by divine revelation rather than human inclination. This was the limitation put on mankind not only to protect and guide us, but also to remind us of our subordination underneath God.

**GOD REIGNS OVER
ALL, BUT HE HAS
DELEGATED
DOMINION AT THIS
UNIQUE JUNCTURE
IN HISTORY WHEN
MANKIND LIVES ON
THE EARTH.**

KEEPING THE GARDEN

We looked earlier at Genesis chapter 1 where we saw that God made man in His own image. Chapter 2, as we will discover, comes back around to tell us how God did

it, what He did, and why He did it. Chapter 2 explains the details of the summary given in chapter 1.

God has made a garden. He has made a unique place of service, and He has given Adam a unique calling within that sphere. Unlike the animals, which God created in groups, God didn't create man that way. He created man in a distinct process for a distinct reason.

We read about this process in chapter 2: "Then the Lord God said, 'It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him'" (Genesis 2:18). The first thing I want us to note from that passage is that it is God who is giving the directive. We don't hear Adam complaining. Adam isn't saying, "Oh no, I'm an adult and I'm not married yet. Why don't you send someone to help me! I'm so alone!"

No, up until then Adam has been functioning as a successful single. What makes him so content and satisfied? He is content because he has been fulfilling his calling. He has been operating in his garden. He has been doing what he was created to do within the sphere God had created for him.

Please notice that before God ever made a woman, He made Adam and gave him a job. The first thing He did was tell Adam to go to work. This way, Adam knew responsibility under God before he was given responsibility over a woman.

When a man has not learned responsibility under God, he will be irresponsible concerning the one he is placed over. When a woman then comes underneath an

irresponsible man, she has opened herself up to a very frustrating life. That is why the very first thing God did when He created Adam was to give Adam a calling and a responsibility.

We read in verse 15, "Then the Lord God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it." The Hebrew word for "keep" is our English word meaning "to guard" or "protect." Adam was to guard and protect the garden. That was where his home would be. And that was what he would oversee.

The question we need to ask is, From what was Adam to guard and protect the garden? This is a perfect world. Not quite, actually. This is a sinless environment, but there is a serpent already there who is going to show up again in chapter 3. The Devil is already there.

Adam's calling and responsibility was to protect the garden from the Devil because when the Devil gets in the garden, he will cause havoc. The Devil is sometimes the vehicle for the chaos we experience in our marriages, and in our lives. I know that we fuss and sometimes fight as couples and we think that it is the other person who is the problem. But that's exactly what the Devil wants. He wants you to believe that it's the other person who is the problem.

He wants you to believe that falsehood because he knows that you will never fix the real problem when the person you are fighting is not the real problem. The problem is a spiritual one brought on by our own sinful natures or by a rebellious and clever Enemy of God.

Until we recognize the covenantal aspect of transcendence in our marriages—that God instituted marriage and is therefore in charge, meaning that His viewpoint must be our viewpoint—we will never experience the productive, purposeful, and peaceful relationship we were designed to have. We will not experience it because we will continue to look at life through the limitations of physical eyes. We will miss out on the connections made in the spiritual realm.

Marriage is a covenantal agreement created to improve the ability of each partner to carry out on earth what God has designated in heaven.

A SUITABLE HELPER

Before God gave man a wife, He gave him a calling. He gave him a garden. He gave him a place to plant and protect. And He gave him a responsibility. But then He gave him something more.

We read in our passage as it continues,

Out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the sky, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called a living creature, that was its name. The man gave names to all the cattle, and to the birds of the sky, and to every beast of the field, but for Adam there was not found a helper suitable for him. So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then He took one of his

ribs and closed up the flesh at that place. The Lord God fashioned into a woman the rib which He had taken from the man, and brought her to the man. (Genesis 2:19–22)

It looks like God is playing cupid here, doesn't it? He is being a matchmaker. God says, "Adam—you are good, but you are not that good. You are great, but you are not that great. Adam, you need help."

In order for Adam to do what God has told him to do, he is going to need help in doing it. But he didn't know that, and so God had him start doing something that would reveal to him a need.

As Adam began naming the animals in the garden, he was in a position to see that every animal had a partner. Every Mr. Antelope had a Mrs. Antelope. Every Mr. Buffalo had a Mrs. Buffalo. Every Mr. Penguin had a Mrs. Penguin. Within the process of fulfilling his responsibility, God revealed to Adam his need.

God let Adam see what he was missing. Everyone else had someone else like them. Adam did not. Notice, God did not give Adam a wife until He first created the realization of needing one. We attach more value to something or someone when we believe that they are needed. One of the most common complaints I hear in counseling sessions with married couples is that one of the partners does not feel needed. In a covenantal union, both partners are needed.

God saw Adam and said, "It is not good" for him to be

alone. In fact, this is the first thing that God declares to be "not good." Up until then, God has been saying that things are good. All that He has created has been good. But with Adam out there doing his thing all by himself, God said, "This is not good. This man needs help."

The question on the floor is, Help to do what?

FASHIONED AS A HELPER

Could it be that Adam needed help to get his clothes washed? Probably not, since he didn't have any. Or maybe he needed someone to clean out his empty coconut shell that he used for drinking water? Maybe he needed someone to wake him up on time to get to work so that he could continue naming the animals? Or to make sure that he got his breakfast? But then again, if that is the kind of help Adam needed, then any maid could do that.

**GOD SAYS,
"ADAM—YOU ARE
GOOD, BUT YOU
ARE NOT THAT
GOOD. YOU ARE
GREAT, BUT YOU
ARE NOT THAT
GREAT. ADAM, YOU
NEED HELP."**

We read in the Bible that God didn't make just any maid, instead He "fashioned" a woman for Adam. He crafted Eve. The word "fashion" is not the same word used when we read about God creating man. When God created man, He reached down to the ground and pretty much just threw some dirt together and said, "There—Man."

But when we read about

God creating Eve, it says He “fashioned” her. To “fashion” something means to build it intricately. God took Adam’s rib, and with it He carefully crafted a woman. God made a woman by forming her to be a uniquely distinct yet suitable completion to the man. So now if Adam wanted his rib back, he would be getting back a lot more than he ever had to begin with.

God gave Adam a suitable helper to his need to carry out the instruction God had previously given, and that is to rule. God didn’t give Eve to Adam just so he could have some company. God gave Eve to Adam so that he could have someone to collaborate with in achieving the goal for which he had been created.

God didn’t fashion Eve out of nothing, ladies, just so she could exist either. He fashioned Eve out of Adam’s rib so that she could have someone with whom to collaborate in her divine purpose of dominion as well.

COMPLEMENTING, NOT CONFLICTING

In light of God’s plan for wholeness in marriage, one of the most uninformed statements that a husband or wife can make is, “We are not compatible.” Sometimes it’s expressed, “We don’t have anything in common,” or, “We are as different as night and day.” Of course you are—if both of you were the same, one of you would be unnecessary! The reason you need each other is because you are different. One likes coffee, the other likes tea. One goes to bed early, the other stays up late.

One of the sweetest blessings God has given me is a

woman who has a personality totally different from mine. I'm an outgoing, exuberant, public personality while my wife is sedate and serene. We are different, and that is according to God's plan. Because our personalities are in contrast, when I'm too outgoing, her reserve pulls me back, and when she is too reserved, my enthusiasm pulls her forward.

Occasionally this causes friction, because I become a little irritated when she's too sedate, and she becomes a little ruffled when I'm too outgoing. But the issue is not our differences; we're supposed to be different. The issue is making those God-given differences work for us instead of against us.

Since sin entered the world, we have lost our understanding of how to make differences complement one another. If we would simply look for what God is trying to teach us through the mate He has given us, we would be growing rather than griping.

You may say, "I don't believe God gave me my mate." It's too late for that conclusion! God will teach you how to love and learn from the one you're with anyway. You and your mate don't have any problems as a result of differences that cannot be solved by applying God's guidelines for making them complementary rather than conflicting.

ACCEPTING GOD'S HELPER

Focusing back on the men for a moment, I believe our culture has often skewed the way women are viewed, and I want to address this. The reason why God gives a man

a wife is not so he can have a cook, maid, or hobby partner, but because the man does not have everything he needs to rule well. The word "helper" can best be explained as someone who is able to collaborate in order to fulfill a purpose. If there was no help, Adam could only rule partially. He could not rule completely.

Let me be more forward—the first reason that God created Eve had nothing to do with sexuality or procreation. It had everything to do with dominion. Animals can procreate, but animals were not created to have dominion. The thing that makes Adam and Eve different from the animals is that they were uniquely given the responsibility, and design, to rule.

When a man rejects the healthy collaborative presence of a woman, he has eclipsed the rule of God in his life. Therefore, he has limited what God is free to do in him and through him in giving him spiritual authority because he has refused the divinely ordained help.

Men, if God provides the help, it is because you need the help. If you don't use the help, you don't get the help. Thus, you do not exercise your full dominion to rule in the sphere in which God has placed you.

The word "suitable," as we look at this further, means an "essential contributor." That is someone who is specifically designed to complement and complete. In other words, a woman's point of view is not extra information. It is essential information. A woman's presence is not merely ornamental. It is vital in furthering the opportunity for dominion.

An unfortunate yet common belief in Christian circles is that since God deemed Eve a "helper" for Adam that women are somehow "less valuable" than men. In fact, women are frequently compared to the Holy Spirit in His role of "Helper"—that part of the Trinity that does a substantial amount of work but gets very little recognition, and appears to have the least amount of authority of the Trinity. Yet a deeper examination of the word used for "helper" in the original language is eye-opening for anyone who has never studied it before.

The Hebrew words translated "helper suitable for him" in the creation story are important to examine because they are uniquely powerful. The words are *ezer*³ and *kenegdo*.⁴ The word *ezer* occurs twenty-one times in the Old Testament, with only two of those occurrences relating to a woman. The remaining times the word is used refer directly to God the Father, the first member of the Trinity, in a superior form.

Let's take a look at a few:

"There is none like the God of Jeshurun, Who rides the heavens to your help [*ezer*] . . ." (Deuteronomy 33:26)

"Our soul waits for the LORD; He is our help [*ezer*] and our shield." (Psalm 33:20)

"But I am afflicted and needy; Hasten to me, O God! You are my help [*ezer*] . . ." (Psalm 70:5)

"Our help [*ezer*] is in the name of the Lord . . ." (Psalm 124:8)

The term *kenegdo* was added to *ezer* in order to distinguish it from every other time in the Old Testament that it was used to refer to a strong help from God. The addition of *kenegdo* draws from its literal definition which is, "Before your face, within your view or purpose."⁵ It can also be translated as "a completion of" or "counterpart to." Through a careful look at the original language, it is easy to determine that Eve's role was not one of subservience, maid service, or even that of being a slave. In the original Hebrew, hers is a strong help comparable to that of God the Father Himself.

The precise terminology that God chose to use for His purpose and intention of women is identical to that which He used to refer to Himself as the primary person in the Godhead. A woman's help can only be defined as a strong help and completion.

Whenever a married man makes a major decision without consulting his mate about it first to get her in-depth perspective, he will make the decision without the necessary components needed to decide well.

Part of a man's headship role is in recognizing that there is a person near to him who understands him and who can give him a perspective that he did not otherwise have. Therefore, any man who does not utilize his mate for her mind, her skills, her intellect, her training, and her giftedness is not a wise kingdom man.

Now, that doesn't mean God doesn't throw in some fun in there along the way as well. Don't get me wrong. Marriage also offers companionship, sexual union, and

procreation. But the primary purpose for marriage we discover in Genesis is to fully supply all that is needed for mankind to carry out this charge called "dominion."

Marriage is a covenantal union designed to strengthen the capacity and ability for each partner to rule the sphere where God has placed them. Through the principle of transcendence, God has established the framework for this union: The freedom to rule within the boundaries that He has set up. Within that framework we find great liberty and great authority, and we will discover, as we utilize this liberty and authority, that our decisions really do matter.