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# WHEN MARRIAGE IS QUESTIONED



*What's the funniest thing you've observed at a wedding?*

**QUESTION #1**

BIBLE STUDIES FOR LIFE **101**

## THE POINT

*Marriage is between one man and one woman for life.*



## THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

Most of us have attended or participated in at least one especially memorable wedding. Some weddings are “over the top” in cost and extravagance. Others are “bare bones” with just an officiant and a couple of witnesses. And a few weddings have those unexpected, yet unforgettable moments.

I know of one young boy who was recruited to be the ringbearer, but as he walked alongside the flower girl, he started to cry. Asked what was wrong, he said, “I don’t want to get married. I want to keep living with mom and dad!” He questioned marriage! But he grew up to change his mind and I was blessed to officiate his wedding years later.

A lot of people these days question the whole nature of marriage: who can marry whom, what makes a marriage a marriage, or even if marriage is needed at all. But marriage is still a good idea, and it’s a good idea because it originated with God! You likely know couples who are a great “advertisement” for what God intended when He brought the first woman to man. For those who question marriage, God has given us the answer.

# WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

## ***Genesis 2:18-20***

**<sup>18</sup> Then the LORD God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.” <sup>19</sup> Now out of the ground the LORD God had formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. <sup>20</sup> The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him.**

Throughout God’s work of creation, He declared it was good. At the conclusion of all He had spoken into existence, “God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good” (Gen. 1:31). But here we see the first time God declared something was not good. “It is not good that the man should be alone.”

God created us to live with others. Being created in the image of God means that, first and foremost, we are to live in relationship to Him. But He also made us for a relationship with others. A sense of community is part of God’s design for us.

Deeper still, God’s design for Adam was to live in a special relationship with one person. “I will make him a helper fit for him.” We can rightly conclude God already knew what He was going to do—He was going to create woman—but first, He paraded the animals past Adam. God allowed Adam to identify and name all the animals, and in the process the man discovered what God already knew. “For Adam there was not found a helper fit for him.” A dog or a cat can make a wonderful companion, but no animal can replace or match what God had in mind!

Let’s be clear about the meaning of *helper*. The helper Adam needed was not someone less than or subservient to him. Biblical writers used the same Hebrew word to describe God helping His people!

***What do you appreciate about  
God’s design for marriage?***

**QUESTION #2**

God created Eve to aid and support Adam. What he lacked, she would accomplish. Both male and female are created in the image of God (see Gen. 1:27), and both genders are equally important. We are equal in our essential nature.

At the same time, we don't ignore that men and women are different. Just as we appreciate the uniqueness of each gender, we recognize that the relationship between a husband and a wife is one where they help and support each other. A husband needs his wife, and a wife needs her husband.

What does this say about being single? Over forty-five percent of American adults are not married. That includes those who were widowed and divorced, but nearly two-thirds of that number has never married.<sup>1</sup>

If a person only read Genesis 2:18, he might conclude that, if we're not married, we're living in a state that is "not good." But being single—unmarried—is neither a curse nor some form of second-class citizenship. Paul made much of the high calling of those who are single. He was single, and he considered it a gift.

We are to embrace whatever state we find ourselves, whether single or married, as a gift from God.

Everything God brings into our lives is with design and purpose. His design for marriage is for a man and woman to live in a close relationship with Him and with each other.

## ***Genesis 2:21-22***

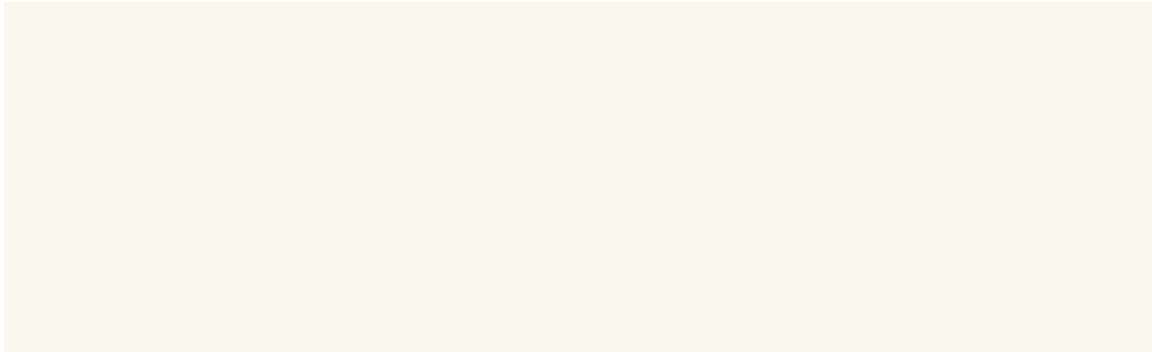
**<sup>21</sup> So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. <sup>22</sup> And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man.**

*In what ways does our culture challenge God's distinct design of men and women?*

**QUESTION #3**

# WEDDING PICTURES

*Which of the following wedding pictures best represents God's principles for marriage? Choose one and explain why it resonates most for you.*



God had the ideal solution for Adam. Adam was created from the dust of the earth, but to create the woman, God performed the first surgery. He put Adam to sleep and took a rib. Eve also was a special creation from God: He took some of the same stuff He had used to create Adam and created her. Being made of the same substance surely underscored and reinforced the unity between them.

Instead of making too much of the significance of the rib, or reading a meaning into the rib that may not be there, let's focus on what the rib does tell us. Man and woman are made of the same "substance." Adam made this clear later when he called Eve "bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh" (v. 23).

Any discussion of our "sameness"—those qualities both males and females share—does not dismiss the uniqueness of the genders. Any biblical understanding of gender starts with Genesis 1:27: "male and female he created them." Our gender is not what we want it to be. We don't define gender; God did—and it hasn't changed.

Our differences do not make one gender stronger or superior to another. Unfortunately, the world often has seen it differently. In some cultures, for example, women are treated like slaves or property. From the beginning, God created the genders unique but always has considered them equal. Jesus elevated women to the status God originally intended. Christianity brought a love and respect for women unheard of in the Roman world. Husbands are to love their wives even as Christ loves us, sacrificing all for them as He gave Himself for us. (See Eph. 5:25.)





## **Genesis 2:23-25**

**<sup>23</sup> Then the man said, “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.” <sup>24</sup> Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. <sup>25</sup> And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.**

Adam may not have known he needed “a helper fit for him” (v. 18), but he recognized it as soon as he saw the woman. Adam’s opening statement, “This at last,” captures that idea. Now Adam had someone like him, someone to whom he could relate and who completed what was lacking in him.

Culture wants to muddy the waters concerning who completes whom. The world wants us to endorse the false idea that it doesn’t matter who “completes” you. *Men can marry men; women can marry women.* The Bible doesn’t show marriage as anything but a relationship between a man and a woman—and it is a covenant relationship. Covenant is a powerful theme throughout the Bible; it is most strongly seen in the various covenants God established with His people. Of course, the ultimate covenant is the eternal covenant through Christ.

Marriage is the first covenant seen in the Bible. Adam expressed the oneness that was in his relationship with Eve: “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.” This oneness is reflected in the actions of the couple: “A man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.”

Marriage involves two people united in commitment. They leave their parents’ homes to form a new home together. They may be away from their parents, but they are not isolated from each other. In marriage, the man and woman are dependent on each other and responsible for each other. The man and woman also share a responsibility in spurring each other toward Christ.

***What principles can we learn from this passage about God’s design for marriage?***

### **QUESTION #4**

***What are some ways our group can help others who are trying to follow God’s design for gender and marriage?***

### **QUESTION #5**

## LIVE IT OUT

How will you embrace and live out the truths in this passage? Choose one of the following applications:

- ▶ **Pray.** If you are married, pray for your spouse daily. If you're not married, pray for those who are. Pray marriages would be lived in ways that honor Christ.
- ▶ **List.** Make a list of the strengths and qualities your spouse brings to your marriage—those traits that make for a strong marriage. If you're not married, list the qualities you would look for in a mate or those you appreciate seeing in a marriage you admire.
- ▶ **Respect.** Respect all individuals as created in the image of God, and show grace and compassion to those who disagree with the biblical definition of marriage or who are confused about gender issues.



We often laugh at things we've seen in weddings or the funny dynamics in some marriages—including our own. But we should make sure whatever we do, we honor this blessed "first institution."

My thoughts

1. <https://www.census.gov/newsroom/facts-for-features/2017/single-americans-week.html>.