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THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE: A COMPARATIVE EXEGETICAL STUDY ON MARITAL UNITY FROM THE GENESIS GARDEN NARRATIVE TO EPHESIANS 5

Abigail M. Diaz
Southeastern University - Lakeland

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THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE:
A COMPARATIVE EXEGETICAL STUDY ON MARITAL UNITY FROM THE GENESIS
GARDEN NARRATIVE TO EPHESIANS 5

by
Abigail Madelyn Diaz

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Abstract

In light of a cultural world in which both real-world marriages and the scholarly interpretation on marital purpose and process are scarred with dysfunction and division, this thesis attempts to contribute to the discussion on the Scriptural purpose and process of marriage as God intends it. In order to discern a glimpse of divine intention of marriage, an exegetical analysis of its divine beginnings in Genesis 1:27-3:24 is performed. This section addresses the original nature of marriage as well as how it was affected as a result of sin and the fall. The following chapter complements this analysis with exegesis on Ephesians 5:21-33 for how it interprets the original Genesis accounts and sheds new light on its greater revelation of Christ and the Church. In the end, this thesis argues that an understanding of marriage and a redemption of its divine purpose of unity requires a humble and Spirit-led approach to interpreting and applying Scriptural revelation on marriage, which can only be found through conjoined study of both the Genesis narrative and its redemptive Christological interpretation in Ephesians.

KEY WORDS: marriage, unity, oneness, exegesis, theology, gender relations, creation, fall, redemption, Genesis, Ephesians

Dedication

To Dillon Amadeus Diaz, my strong and loving husband, who always supports, encourages, and cherishes me so well. Thank you for your tender and sacrificial leadership. You make honoring you easy.

To Michael and Lynn Sprinkle, my wonderful parents, who have shown me what a Christ-led and unified marriage looks like. Thank you for never giving up on each other, and thank you for giving me such a beautiful example of God's design for marriage.

To Madelyn, my great-grandmother, whose name and engagement ring have been passed down to me. Thank you for your beautiful legacy of devotion to God and your family. I pray my life reflects your legacy well.

To Jesus Christ, my LORD and Savior, who saved my soul and whose love and unity with His Church is the epitome of the beauty of marital oneness. Thank you for your grace and love which you never cease to pour out over me.



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INTRODUCTION

Originally written in 1941, C.S. Lewis' book *The Screwtape Letters* creatively presents a variety of insights on the spiritual life, including marriage, from the perspective of a demon writing letters to another demon on how to affect humans against their Creator - "the Enemy." In training the younger demon about human marriage, the elder demon has frightening thoughts and cunning strategies for its attempted destruction:

The Enemy described a married couple as "one flesh". He did not say "a happily married couple" or "a couple who married because they were in love", but you can make the humans ignore that.... They regard the intention of loyalty to a partnership for mutual help, for the preservation of chastity, and for the transmission of life, as something lower than a storm of emotion. (Don't neglect to make your man think the marriage-service very offensive.)¹

It is astonishing how Lewis' insights on marriage and Satan's attacks against it are relevant to modern times. For how characteristic it is of the true rival to pit the generous Creator against us as our "Enemy," to instill offense at God's design for unity and servitude in marriage, and to motivate human relations by fleeting drives and emotions rather than intentional care, trust, and commitment.

These tactics are evident from the ancient conversation between human and crafty serpent to the current human relations seen in modern society. Even in just the past century, culture has shifted, through influencers such as Judge Ben B. Lindsey, from a more committed perspective of marriage to one more focused on individual fulfillment, allowing separation when such fulfillment is not accomplished.² Not only is the divorce rate commonly known to be

1. C.S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters*, ill. ed. (West Chicago: Lord and King Associates, 1976), 63-64.

2. Rebecca L. Davis, "'Not Marriage at All, but Simple Harlotry': The Companionate Marriage Controversy," *The Journal of American History* 94, no. 4 (2008): 1137-1163, accessed October 31, 2018, <https://doi.org/10.2307/25095323>.

substantially higher than prior centuries, but the reasons for divorce are often in some way related to fault or blame on the other person.³ Whether the blame is based in reality or perception, it is clear that selfish and individual desires and emotions - rather than unconditional love and commitment - drive the union, execution, and dissolution of marriage in today's world. Yet, even though separations and divorce have become more prevalent, this does not necessarily mean that people were always relating in humble and selfless unity simply because an actualized divorce was more socially unacceptable. For from the initial division in Eden, marriages throughout time have felt the tugs and effects of human depravity.⁴

The realm of Biblical conversation and scholarship in regards to marital concepts and values in some ways is not necessarily any more enhanced than its cultural practice. For even in attempting to interpret Biblical principles and Scriptural truths on marriage, many scholars appear to be motivated by politics, personal interest, an inherent bias, or simply a faulty presumption about a Biblical text that causes many to reject or misinterpret Scriptural instructions and revelations on the matter.⁵ Interpreting the Biblical insights on marriage has evidently divided scholars and laymen alike into the two camps of complementarianism and

3. Paul R. Amato and Denise Previti, "People's Reasons for Divorcing: Gender, Social Class, the Life Course, and Adjustment," *Journal of Family Issues* 24, no. 5, (July 2003): 619, accessed October 31, 2018, <http://journals.sagepub.com/seu.idm.oclc.org/doi/pdf/10.1177/0192513X03254507>.

4. Derek Kidner, *Genesis: An Introduction and Commentary*, ed. D. J. Wiseman, The Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 1967), 73.

5. c.f. Yolanda Dreyer, "Women's Spirituality and Feminist Theology: A Hermeneutic of Suspicion Applied to 'Patriarchal Marriage,'" *Hervormde Teologiese Studies* 67, no. 3 (September 2011): 1-5. <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v67i3.1104>; c.f. Karen V. Guth, "To See from Below: Dietrich Bonhoeffer's Mandates and Feminist Ethics," *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics* 33, no. 2 (2013): 131-150, accessed October 31, 2018, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23563099>; c.f. Ian A. McFarland, "A Canonical Reading of Ephesians 5:21-33: Theological Gleanings," *Theology Today* 57, no. 3 (October 2000): 344-356, accessed October 31, 2018, <https://seu.idm.oclc.org/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=rft&AN=ATLA0000915735&site=ehost-live&scope=site>; c.f. Gary J. Quinn, "A New Look at Christian Marriage," *Journal of Religion and Health* 10, no. 4 (1971): 387-398, accessed October, 31, 2018, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27505096>.

egalitarianism with the passage of Ephesians 5:21-33 as a primary text of focus, with which complementarians often overlook the mutual submission command of verse 21 and egalitarians reject the headship-submission instruction of verse 24.⁶ Whereas some will argue complete equality without gender roles was designated in the original creation, and thus reject the explicit or implied insights of Eph. 5:21-33, others will claim that God's initial design of creation inherently designated a hierarchical chain of command and take Eph. 5:21-33 farther than it was ever intended to go.

In light of this debate, it is still vitally important to explore the entirety of Scripture to attempt to interpret the divine design of the marital institution. No single passage can stand alone, be misinterpreted to force it to agree with one's perception of another passage, nor be rejected as inherently flawed. Thus, to observe God's original, ongoing, and ultimate desire for the marital union requires a study of both creation's opening chapters, as well as their revelational interpretation in New Testament teachings.⁷ Although it is not plausible to include every mention and teaching from the Scriptures on marriage in order to get an extensive perspective, this thesis attempts to observe certain key passages in order to argue that a proper understanding of Biblical marriage, such as what is presented in Ephesians 5:21-33, can only be fully accomplished through the lens of original intended unity and the ultimately purposed reflection of Christ and His relationship with the church. In exploring this issue, this thesis focuses on the following questions:

- What was intended and experienced between man and woman at creation?

6. Neville Curle, "Towards a Theology of Authority and Submission in Marriage," *Conspectus (South African Theological Seminary)* 15 (March 2013): 108–110, accessed October 31, 2018, <https://seu.idm.oclc.org/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a9h&AN=90599108&site=ehost-live&scope=site>.

7. Kidner, *Genesis: An Introduction*, 31.

- How was their relationship affected by the fall and the curses that resulted?
- How do apostolic teaching and the revelation of Christ coalesce with the Genesis text?
- What does all of this implicate for the Christian marriage even today?

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this thesis is to discern the original nature of marital unity as created by God and how this unity was broken and affected in the fall, and then to examine New Testament Christological and apostolic principles in how they draw from and contribute to the Genesis text. The ultimate goal is then to argue that an understanding of marriage and a redemption of its divine purpose of unity requires a humble and Spirit-led approach to interpreting and applying Scriptural revelation on marriage, which can only be found through conjoined study of both the Genesis narrative and its redemptive Christological interpretation in Ephesians.

Thus, in answering the above questions, the approach in developing this thesis is to first perform in-depth exegetical study on Genesis 1:26-3:24, where the first marital union and the downfall of its members are found. Before exegeting the specific text, the historical and literary contexts of the book of Genesis are briefly observed. The following section forms the largest portion of the thesis in expounding on the focal text of Genesis. Beginning at the first mention of humanity, the chapter presents a detailed analysis of the narrative and its implications through the conclusion of the fall, concluding with the overarching principles and effects derived from the narrative relevant even to this day.

After the detailed Genesis study of the narrative, the thesis shifts to the New Testament to observe its contributions to the divine revelation of marital design, focusing specifically on the Ephesians 5:21-33 marital code and the Christological revelation which the passage presents. The process of this chapter is structured around an exegetical study of the Ephesians passage, while pulling from other texts to connect it to Christ. All the while, the chapter connects the revelations of the New Testament with that of the Genesis narrative to display the redemptive purpose of the instructions towards the designed unity of marriage, including how it reveals itself

in the reality of the Christ-church relationship. Tying this section into the conclusion, the thesis will finally present the general principles of redeeming this unity today.

The process and method of study throughout this thesis is essentially an extended literature review. The sources used are predominantly a wide variety of biblical and Scriptural commentaries or similar exegetical books, yet include some peer-reviewed journal articles as well. At few points, a less scholarly form of reference is used, such as a practical/popular book, for the purpose of accentuating a Scriptural point with modern application or expression. The authors of these sources span across varying perspectives and their contexts reach across a breadth of decades and cultural settings, so as to provide a sufficient scope of reliable research in attempting to uncover truth.

All in all, this thesis is approached with intentionality and respect for the sovereignty of God's truth. For to truly understand God's desire for marriage and unity requires more than unaffected scholarly study, it requires the spiritual revelation of the Holy Spirit. I do not attempt to write on the truth of God without seeking Him for it. I tremble at the thought of speaking for God apart from His true Word - the very tactic of deception used by the serpent in the garden. Thus, I have devoted myself to prayer and meditation throughout the writing process. I do not presume to be speaking the sovereign truth of God without human error, but rather attempt to observe whatever possible through Spirit-guided scholarly study. On all of these grounds, the following thesis is presented.

THE GENESIS OBSERVATION

In approaching a controversial topic through the lens of Scripture, it is vital never to read personal opinions and thoughts into the text, but rather to objectively consider the overarching teaching throughout the entirety of God's Word.⁸ To fully grasp God's intention for marriage requires exegetical study of both the text itself and the historical context in which it was written. In approaching such a feat, to understand the Biblical perspective of gender and marriage requires starting where it all began: the Garden of Eden.

The narrative portrayed in the garden setting is found within Genesis, which is part of the grander section of Biblical beginnings - the Pentateuch. While authorship of Genesis is not known with one hundred percent certainty, Moses is acknowledged in both Jewish tradition and the New Testament to be the author of the Pentateuch as a whole.⁹ Yet, due to the third-person nature of many references to Moses throughout the Pentateuch, it is possible that the information was simply obtained from Moses, even if it was scribed by someone else.¹⁰

In terms of the Genesis context, there are two sides to consider: the historical context of the characters and the historical context of the audience.¹¹ Being that this thesis focuses on the creation account in Genesis of Adam and Eve, the historical-cultural context of the characters is a unique side to observe. This is a rare account of Scripture that lacks a broad cultural context because it tells of the first two people on earth. However, this is a vital point of context because

8. James B. Hurley, *Man and Woman in Biblical Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981), 80.

9. Frank E. Gaebelin, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary with The New International Version of The Holy Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1990) 2:3,5.

10. Kidner, *Genesis: An Introduction*, 15.

11. Gaebelin, *Expositor's Bible Commentary*, 3.

it is the beginning of the world and of humanity, giving insight into how it was intended to be and what happened to affect how it continues throughout time. Nonetheless, the historical-cultural context of the book's audience is more tangible, however uncertain. There is much debate as to the date and contextual history of the Genesis text, but Brueggemann suggests it to be written around "the sixth century B.C. and addressed to exiles[,]" with an effect of proving God's faithfulness in the midst of contrasting ideas and trying circumstances.¹²

In any case, the Pentateuch text is marked by a consistent theme of the promise of God and the covenant with His people.¹³ Through the method of story-telling, Genesis portrays the process of this promise and God-man relations by recounting past events and foretelling that which is still to come.¹⁴ There is an implication that the past connects and corresponds to the future, manifested by the recurrence of certain figures and subjects from early Genesis chapters found again in Revelation such as the serpent, tree of life, paradise, and even marriage.¹⁵ In light of this, the opening Genesis chapters - as supplemented by New Testament interpretation - provide insight on God's promise that the originally designed peace and unity are ultimately to be redeemed and fulfilled.¹⁶

12. Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, Word Biblical Commentary (Waco: Word Books, 1987), xlii-xlv; Walter Brueggemann, *Genesis*, Interpretation, a Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1982), 24-25.

13. Gaebelein, *Expositor's Bible Commentary*, 2:12.

14. Brueggemann, *Genesis*, 4; Gaebelein, *Expositor's Bible Commentary*, 2:8; Kidner, *Genesis: An Introduction*, 14.

15. Gaebelein, *Expositor's Bible Commentary*, 2:10; Kidner, *Genesis: An Introduction*, 14. Kidner's commentary notes connection of Genesis figures to Revelation, but does not include marriage in his examples. I added the example of marriage because Genesis begins with the union of man and woman, and Revelation ends with the eternal marital union of Christ and His bride.

16. Kidner, *Genesis: An Introduction*, 14, 31.

Creation

“Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness” (1:26)¹⁷: the first reference to humanity in all the Scriptures. The initial point to be noted is the plurality of God expressed in this verse. Some have theorized that this “us” refers to the angels of heaven, however, there is no indication elsewhere in Scriptures that mankind is made in the image of angels.¹⁸ In light of Christological and pneumatological considerations, a modern interpretation quite logically suggests this plurality refers to the triune Godhead, but because the concept of the Trinity was not an explicitly realized thought until later in history, some scholars suggest that this is not what the original author intended.¹⁹ Nonetheless, this multiplicity of God’s command has theological implications for the following verse which - specifying a gender distinction for the first time in the creation account²⁰ - says, “in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them” (1:27). The one and only God expressed in plural terms parallels the fact that the “singular man (‘ādām) is created as a plurality, ‘male and female’”²¹ Thus, the full meaning of the *Imago Dei* is purposed to be expressed in both of the sexes – male and female.²² Both the plurality and the community of humanity are created as an expression of the plurality of community within God.²³ The *plurality* of God with *singularity* of movement and purpose - a

17. All Bible references are from the New International Version (NIV) 2011 unless otherwise noted.

18. Gaebelein, *Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, 2:37.

19. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 1:27-28. Yet, in the sovereignty of God, I believe that God could have inspired the author to write ‘us’ in reflection of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit even if the author himself did not understand this idea or truth about God.

20. Gaebelein, *Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, 2:37.

21. *Ibid.*, 2:38.

22. Gerhard Von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary*, trans. John H Marks, rev. ed., The Old Testament Library (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1972), 60.

23. Gaebelein, *Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, 2:38.

picture of perfect unity and community - is intended to be reflected within humanity. Man and woman are mutually and communally made to represent the image of their Creator. This is their primary spiritual purpose. After blessing *both* with the responsibility to “be fruitful and increase in number” and to rule over the earth and its creatures,²⁴ God declares this human community - and all he has made - to be “very good” (1:28-31). The world in which God and man communed was a naturally beautiful and unified paradise.²⁵ Thus, satisfied with a work so “attuned to his purposes,” the divine Creator rests (2:1-3).²⁶

Chapter two of the Genesis account then goes on to expound upon the simple creation of mankind account of chapter one, specifying the details of how the LORD God created humankind. While the previous chapter had used the simple and impersonal name *Elohim* in referencing God, this version of man’s creation narrative now uses the personal name for God - *Yahweh Elohim* - showing the personal and intimate relationship between the Creator and those made in his image.²⁷ When the LORD God had created man out of the dust of the ground and breathed life into him (2:7), this personal Creator extends to him “*vocation, permission, and prohibition.*”²⁸ Man’s *vocation* - in keeping with creation’s purpose of unity and as a secondary

24. Kenneth O. Gangel, “Toward a Biblical Theology of Marriage and Family Pt 1: Pentateuch and Historical Books; Pt 2: Poetical and Prophetic Books,” *Journal of Psychology & Theology* 5, no. 1 (Winter 1977): 56, accessed October 1, 2018, <https://seu.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=rft&AN=ATLA0000760430&site=ehost-live&scope=site>.

25. Paul F. Scotchmer, “Lessons from Paradise on Work, Marriage, and Freedom A Study of Genesis 2:4-3:24,” *Evangelical Review of Theology* 28, no. 1 (January 2004): 81, accessed October 1, 2018, <https://seu.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a9h&AN=12284294&site=ehost-live&scope=site>.

26. Brueggemann, *Genesis*, 17-18, 37.

27. Scotchmer, “Lessons from Paradise,” 81.

28. Brueggemann, *Genesis*, 46.

subsection of his purpose to reflect the image of God - was to care for the very ground he came from (2:15). The rule given to man over creation in the previous chapter was to be practically accomplished by his nurture and care over it. Thus, Adam's responsibility was to work and take care of the garden – all the while obeying, fellowshiping with, and worshipping God.²⁹ Man's *permission* - again in alignment with the Creator's image - was that he was free: specifically free to eat from any tree in the garden which he cared for, and ultimately free to worship his Maker who he was created for.³⁰ For although he could not predetermine or change his purpose, he was not forced or coerced into fulfilling it.³¹ This *permission* of freedom is intertwined with and inseparable from the *vocation* to care for that which he ruled over and to worship who he was created under.³² It is thus a freedom to be used for others, not for himself.³³ Finally, as the necessary limit of his freedom, man's *prohibition* is the “expectation of obedience” to the stated yet unexplained command not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (2:16-17).³⁴ All man is and does must remain in the boundary of God's all-knowing designation of good. For when man trusts God's knowledge of good, he enjoys its accompanying pleasure,³⁵ and he “delights to do the will of the Creator.”³⁶ For man to cross the boundary, however, is to doubt

29. Gaebelein, *Expositor's Bible Commentary*, 2:44-45; Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 80-81.

30. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall: A Theological Interpretation of Genesis 1-3*, trans. John C. Fletcher (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1959), 36-37.

31. Brueggemann, *Genesis*, 13, 17-18, 27-28.

32. *Ibid.*, 46.

33. Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall*, 37.

34. Brueggemann, *Genesis*, 46.

35. Gaebelein, *Expositor's Bible Commentary*, 2:45.

36. Brueggemann, *Genesis*, 28.

God's divine knowledge and to grasp hold of the impossible and dangerous attempt to discern good for himself.³⁷

After the Creator gives this blessing and command, He then further exemplifies His own knowledge of good by stating for the first time that something was *not* good: that man should be alone.³⁸ God, in further illumination of his own image in mankind, created man for companionship and relationship,³⁹ and until this need was fulfilled, humanity was yet incomplete and not yet "good."⁴⁰ Therefore, the LORD presents all the creatures of the earth to Adam, and yet, "no suitable helper was found" (2:19-20). Adam, expressing his caring rule over the animals, named each and every one of them. Even so, his need for fellowship, partnership, and companionship could not be fulfilled from any of the creatures under his dominion; "they remain creatures subjected to him," while "Adam remains alone."⁴¹ Power could not fulfill his emptiness; he needed intimate fellowship.⁴² He cannot truly "live until he loves, giving himself away (24) to another on his level."⁴³ Thus, none of the animals would do. He still lacked one who was like him as his equal - someone with which to become one.⁴⁴

37. Scotchmer, "Lessons from Paradise," 81-82; Gaebelein, *Expositor's Bible Commentary*, 2:45.

38. Gaebelein, *Expositor's Bible Commentary*, 2:45-46; Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 68.

39. Gaebelein, *Expositor's Bible Commentary*, 2:46.

40. Gilbert Bilezikian, *Beyond Sex Roles: What the Bible Says about a Woman's Place in Church and Family*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 22.

41. Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall*, 59.

42. Kidner, *Genesis: An Introduction*, 65.

43. *Ibid.*, 65.

44. Gangel, "Toward a Biblical Theology of Marriage and Family Pt 1," 56.

Therefore, God decided to make a “helper” for Adam. This Hebrew word for “helper” is not connoted with someone inferior, but rather a partner or someone in correspondence⁴⁵ – someone matching him for the purpose of the “mutual support that companionship provides.”⁴⁶ Thus, if man’s *vocation* in the garden was for unity expressed in worship and fellowship towards God, this companion was intended to take on the same purpose and assist the man in fulfilling it together.⁴⁷ Her physical purpose - under the spiritually purposed reflection of God’s image - was to be a partner in the functions given to man: caring for the garden, subduing the earth, and being fruitful and multiplying.⁴⁸ Likewise, if man’s *permission* was freedom, so this helper’s would be. Finally, if man’s *prohibition* was not to eat the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil, so her limit would also be. So out of the man himself, expressing this intended equality and unity, God thus created such a partner - woman.

The divine Creator puts the man in a deep slumber, disguising the wonder of his “miraculous creating”,⁴⁹ and forms this woman. Rather than creating the woman from dust as he did the man and molding another separate and individual stranger,⁵⁰ God’s purposed oneness is expressed as he forms woman from Adam’s own rib and flesh, signifying her identity as his equal and their relationship as intimate.⁵¹ For she was not inferior because she was created

45. John H. Walton, *Genesis: From Biblical Text ... to Contemporary Life*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 176-177.

46. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 68.

47. Gaebelein, *Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, 2:44-45, 48.

48. Walton, *Genesis: From Biblical Text*, 187.

49. Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 84.

50. Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall*, 59-60.

51. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 69.

second, rather she was the final touch and the “crowning event” to make the purposed community of a unified creation complete.⁵² After forming and raising up such a precious treasure, the LORD God, “like a father of the bride, leads the woman to the man.”⁵³ For the “LORD God brought her to the man” (2:22), implying that she, like Adam, knew her Creator before she knew her fellow partner. Adam excitedly rejoices at the sight of his companionate and covenant-bonded helper, exclaiming her to be “bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh” (2:23).⁵⁴ He sees in her something not found in the animals; he sees a resemblance of himself in her.⁵⁵ It is not that he sees one identical to him, but one complementary to him, with which he could relate and connect in intimacy.⁵⁶ He recognizes her humanity - for she is *wo*-man as he is man.⁵⁷ Furthermore, he acknowledges and values the covenantal bond they share because of their united origin.⁵⁸ She is not only someone like him and equal to him; she is from him and for him. Yet he does not claim credit, portray any arrogant pride, or demand his rights over her because she came from his body, but rather expresses complete humility and joyous gratitude at the presentation of God’s miraculous and gracious gift.⁵⁹ She is not simply his, but he is hers - for they belong to one another.⁶⁰ They live, not for themselves, but for each other. She is purposed to care for and

52. Brueggemann, *Genesis*, 50-51.

53. Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 84.

54. Kathleen M. O’Connor, *Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary: Genesis 1-25A* (Macon: Smyth & Helwys Publishing, 2018), 54.

55. Gaebelein, *Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, 2:47.

56. Kidner, *Genesis*, 35-36.

57. O’Connor, *Genesis 1-25a*, 54; Bilezikian, *Beyond Sex Roles*, 25.

58. O’Connor, *Genesis 1-25a*, 54.

59. Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall*, 60.

60. *Ibid.*, 60.

support him as her origin; he is responsible to nurture and treasure her as his own flesh. In this selfless and harmonious intimacy, there is unity.

“Therefore a man shall leave...” (2:24a ESV). Turning from the narrative account of the first marriage, the author explicitly establishes its divine value. He shifts from a *descriptive* narrative to a *prescriptive* principle of God’s design for marriage.⁶¹ The mention of a father and mother did not directly apply to Adam as he was the first created man. Nonetheless, speaking to a cultural audience in which a person’s family was the source of his identity and worth, the author signifies that the marital relationship is divinely intended from the beginning to be a strong bond above all others, stronger than even blood ties.⁶² The man’s primary call in the marriage relationship is to his wife and vice versa, prioritizing their covenantal unity above all outside relations and responsibilities.⁶³ This was the given process to achieve the designed purpose: “and they become one flesh” (2:24b). They were “originally *one* flesh” and “must come together again.”⁶⁴ As Bonhoeffer states it, “they were one from their origin and only when they become one do they return to their origin.”⁶⁵ It is not that they are ridden of their uniqueness, but it is the full expression of the reality that they belong to each other.⁶⁶ In a way, they are each other’s visual representation of the limit of freedom given by God, because they are not their own, but each other’s.⁶⁷ For they are to use their freedom to serve, care for, support, and relate to

61. Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 84-85.

62. Scotchmer, “Lessons from Paradise,” 82-83.

63. Wenham, *Genesis*, 71.

64. Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 84-85.

65. Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall*, 60.

66. *Ibid.*

67. *Ibid.*, 61.

the other rather than themselves. Yet, in a beautifully perfect and harmonious unity, the limit is not viewed as such with resentment, but accepted graciously bound with complete love for the other.⁶⁸ For when they are one, the other's well-being is also their own. By maintaining a communal relationship marked by "solidarity, trust, and well-being[,]" they are fully united, and the two become one.⁶⁹

This divinely designed unity is expressed through the holy sexuality between the two as they "become one flesh." Their oneness is not necessarily limited to mere carnality, but the physical sexual activity is the tangible realization of their grander unity and mutual belonging.⁷⁰ Thus, the power of the sexual act is that it is the return to a united origin. For even the act itself is not purely physical. The word used throughout the Scriptures for such an activity is the word meaning "to know," implying its intimately personal and relational essence.⁷¹ Sex is the pleasurable gift from God that accompanies and signifies the intimate commitment of a harmonious union. Furthermore, being a process whereby two can literally contribute to the formation of another single and eternal soul, it is a gift of "participation in divine creativity."⁷² The triune God, who Himself created eternal human souls by way of a unified communal act ["Let *us* make man..." (1:26)], designates a similar life-giving process to be enjoyed within a relationship of complete harmony and unity - a relationship divinely purposed to reflect His image.

68. Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall*, 61.

69. Brueggemann, *Genesis*, 47.

70. Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall*, 62.

71. Kidner, *Genesis: An Introduction*, 36.

72. O'Connor, *Genesis 1-25a*, 58-59.

The text here returns to the Adam and Eve narrative to reiterate the peaceful, unified intimacy between them, for they “were both naked, and they felt no shame” (2:25). Adam and Even enjoyed the divinely intended physical, emotional, and spiritual unity. Their nakedness was a sign of vulnerability, of trust, and of harmony.⁷³ They were unashamed because - having not yet eaten of the tree of knowledge - they *knew* no reason to be otherwise. Shame could only be experienced through knowledge of division.⁷⁴ Shame would indicate personal and relational disunity and dissatisfaction.⁷⁵ The other would no longer be “satisfied just to belong to me but desires something from me.”⁷⁶ But knowing nothing better than their perfect unity, they trusted in each other’s loving belonging without shame. Shame would mean something was not *good* and not as their faithful Creator intended. Yet they lived unashamed - for they trusted God’s verbal designation of good to be true and His creation’s original state to be just as it should. Their perfect love left no room for fear.⁷⁷ Thus, in perfect relationship and worship of their Maker,⁷⁸ having nothing to hide, and being “secure in themselves and in one another,”⁷⁹ they were together as one: naked and unashamed.

Fall

This beautiful picture of oneness and intimacy given by God for the sake of his own glory, however, was threatened at the very introduction of another voice - one which was outside

73. O’Connor, *Genesis 1-25a*, 64.

74. Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall*, 63.

75. *Ibid.*

76. *Ibid.*

77. c.f. 1 John 4:18; Brueggemann, *Genesis*, 53.

78. Gangel, “Toward a Biblical Theology of Marriage and Family Pt 1,” 61.

79. Walton, *Genesis: From Biblical Text*, 179.

of their triune union. Until this point, the only conversing among humanity was between God and man, and between man and woman. Now, a new chapter begins (3:1), and a crafty serpent enters with a seemingly simple question: “Did God really say...?” With the utterance of an innocently disguised inquiry, the snake “fractures all relationships in the garden.”⁸⁰ The name used for God drops *Yahweh* and reverts to simply *Elohim*, for He is no longer the relational and faithful Creator, but an official and distant entity under investigation.⁸¹ Humanity is no longer conversing *with* God, but rather *about* Him, engaging in the “first theological talk” in history.⁸²

Nonetheless, the serpent is subtle. He does not yet contradict God’s Word directly, but simply presents the plausibility of a misunderstanding.⁸³ His questioning of God’s command presents the idea that “God’s word is subject to [human] judgment.”⁸⁴ Are they not to eat from *any* tree (3:1)? He exaggerates God’s command, forcing Eve to defend God’s actual words. Yet, by entertaining the question and having to correct at all, Eve is already falling trap to his schemes.⁸⁵ She counters the serpent’s obvious exaggeration with a more obscure one, yet nonetheless “magnifying God’s strictness,”⁸⁶ as she states that they can eat of any tree except the one in the middle, but *they must not even touch it*, or they will die (3:2-3). Her words are already expressing doubt about her Creator’s goodness, and even the voice through which it was relayed - her husband. The discourse continues with the serpent now correcting God’s word for the sake

80. O’Connor, *Genesis 1-25a*, 61.

81. Scotchmer, “Lessons from Paradise,” 83.

82. Brueggemann, *Genesis*, 47-48.

83. Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall*, 66.

84. Kidner, *Genesis: An Introduction*, 67.

85. Kidner, *Genesis: An Introduction*, 67-68; Brueggemann, *Genesis*, 48.

86. Kidner, *Genesis: An Introduction*, 67-68.

of His intention, claiming to know a deeper truth about God than the words these humans heard really expressed.⁸⁷ “You will not certainly die” (3:4). He did not deny the existence of the command, but suggested the discrepancy between God’s Word and *actual truth* was found in the consequences. Whereas the woman exaggerated the Creator’s command, the serpent “underplayed God’s penalties.”⁸⁸ The limit that God gave in order to protect was now presented as a threat intended to manipulate.⁸⁹ “For God *knows...*”⁹⁰ (3:5), yet is withholding. The LORD God whom they communed with and trusted, is really only trying to protect Himself, holding back from them what is truly *good* - knowledge.⁹¹

The discourse concludes, and the deception is finalized. Having established his power by pretending to speak to the true character of God apart from His Word,⁹² humanity no longer trusts God’s knowledge of good, but must grasp that knowledge for themselves.⁹³ Anxiety has set in, because their peace can no longer rest in their Creator, who is assumed to be dishonest and selfish with His power.⁹⁴ Overcoming this anxiety is attempted by overcoming God Himself.⁹⁵ For if God is using His power to protect Himself, they must procure His power to obtain their

87. Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall*, 66.

88. Scotchmer, “Lessons from Paradise,” 83-84.

89. Brueggemann, *Genesis*, 48.

90. Italics added for emphasis.

91. Gaebelein, *Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, 2:51.

92. Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall*, 66-67.

93. Brueggemann, *Genesis*, 49.

94. *Ibid.*, 53.

95. *Ibid.*

own security.⁹⁶ This anxiety fuels their desire to be “like God” (3:5), yet they neglect to realize they were already made in his image.⁹⁷

Thus, examining the fruit, the woman seizes the divine role of discernment and “saw that [it] was good” (3:6) - a phrase previously attributed only to God.⁹⁸ She took the fruit and ate. In a last glimpse of marital unity, she gave to her husband beside her, and he joined in her consumption (3:6). She rejected both the Word of God and trust in her husband who she shared the Word with. For her understanding of the Word was received secondhand, and yet he who gave her the Word did not defend it.⁹⁹ Although perhaps enticed, Adam was not personally *deceived* (I Tim. 2:14), for he had both received the initial command of God directly and even seen His goodness as He placed man in paradise and compassionately gifted him the woman to fulfill his needs of companionship.¹⁰⁰ Despite this, Adam had bothered neither to speak up for God’s Word against the serpent, nor even to correct his wife in her exaggeration of it.¹⁰¹ Rather than caring for his wife as his own flesh and rescuing her from deception, he abstained from involvement and remained passive.¹⁰² He neither stood up for God, nor protected her. He said nothing; so she listened to the voice of another. Adam followed suit with a mutual desire to circumvent his Creator, and submitted to her words as the expense of God’s (3:17).¹⁰³ Though he

96. Brueggemann, *Genesis*, 53-54.

97. Gaebelein, *Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, 2:51.

98. *Ibid.*

99. Bilezikian, *Beyond Sex Roles*, 32; Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 90.

100. Bilezikian, *Beyond Sex Roles*, 36, 33.

101. *Ibid.*, 32.

102. John Eldredge, *Wild at Heart: Discovering the Secret of a Man’s Soul* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2001), 51; Bilezikian, *Beyond Sex Roles*, 36.

103. Bilezikian, *Beyond Sex Roles*, 36, 42.

knew his accountability to God's command, she was his opportunity to rebel against Him.¹⁰⁴ In an ironic attempt to attain divine status, both of them allowed themselves to be ruled by the creation they were called to rule over - the serpent.¹⁰⁵ Neither stood firm. Together, they fell: Adam due to Eve's deception, and Eve to Adam's silence. The two fall as one, yet are guilty individually and alone.¹⁰⁶

The natural effects of their anxious disobedience were immediately realized. At the taste of the forbidden fruit, the grandeur of the wisdom and perfection deceitfully promised to them fell to void and shame. "They realized they were naked" (3:7). This nakedness was no longer a mark of communal harmony, but a threat to bodily security.¹⁰⁷ Unified and peaceful trust turns to anxious and defensive vulnerability. After once being in such divinely intended unity in their *Imago Dei* as to see themselves in one another, now they were divided, ashamed of their differences before each other and before God.¹⁰⁸ The knowledge presented to advance them to be more "like God" only caused them to realize "they were no longer even like each other."¹⁰⁹ Their perspective of their *other* shifts from being their own flesh to being someone else.¹¹⁰ Now, "perfect fear casts out love."¹¹¹ With the newly grasped discernment of good and evil, they no

104. Bilezikian, *Beyond Sex Roles*, 36.

105. Kidner, *Genesis: An Introduction*, 68.

106. Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall*, 75.

107. O'Connor, *Genesis 1-25a*, 64.

108. Gaebelien, *Expositor's Bible Commentary*, 2:47, 52.

109. *Ibid.*, 2:52.

110. Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall*, 77-78.

111. Brueggemann, *Genesis*, 53.

longer approve of themselves, and they do not approve of each other.¹¹² Man and woman no longer tend to each other as their own; the focus has shifted solely to their individual selves and the personal horror that arose from taking freedom farther than its limit.¹¹³ Thus, each attending to themselves, they cover up themselves with fig leaves to shield their guilt. The shame of a conjoined act disjointed them.¹¹⁴ The relationship of pure and open unity is broken - not because they disagreed, but rather “[agreed] together against God.”¹¹⁵

Yet, the LORD God - *Yahweh Elohim* - searched for them. Their ever personal and relational Creator was walking in the garden where they dwelled, and they heard Him (3:8). At what may have previously been a soothing sound of the tangible and tender presence of their Creator God, now they frantically hid in fear of facing Him.¹¹⁶ Nonetheless, in His grace, The LORD God calls to them.¹¹⁷ He first addressed the man, for God held the responsibility for the fall firstly over Adam before over Eve, as he was the first to receive the initial prohibition.¹¹⁸ “Where are you (3:9)?” - a rhetorical question from an omniscient God.¹¹⁹ Yet, His compassion desires to invite humanity out of hiding.¹²⁰ The man replies: “I heard you” (3:10) - the sound of intimate relationship with His Creator was perceived to be a threat.¹²¹ “I was afraid” (3:10) - the

112. O'Connor, *Genesis 1-25a*, 64.

113. Brueggemann, *Genesis*, 48.

114. Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 92.

115. Kidner, *Genesis: An Introduction*, 36.

116. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 76.

117. Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall*, 82.

118. Hurley, *Man and Woman*, 60; Bilezikian, *Beyond Sex Roles*, 38.

119. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 77.

120. Kidner, *Genesis: An Introduction*, 70.

121. Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall*, 82.

answer setting the precedent for all confronted in their sin for lack of faith.¹²² “I was naked” (3:10) - by the time he had heard God, he had already covered his physical nakedness; yet, he was ashamed still of his spiritual nakedness.¹²³ “I hid” (3:10) - his hiding already implicates him, admitting he had something to conceal.¹²⁴ Nonetheless, although he recognizes God’s direct address to him as individual (as implied by “I” responses), he does not yet give the whole story, nor admit explicit guilt; for now, he is simply excusing his shame and his hiding, not his sin.¹²⁵

God’s nudging has not yet received confession, so his questions continue: “Who told you that you were naked (3:11)? Have you eaten of the tree...?” By exhibiting shame and vulnerability in his nakedness, Adam is pointing out his own guilt, because feeling shame requires recognition of offense, and feeling vulnerable entails awareness of potential attack - i.e. the knowledge of evil.¹²⁶ Thus, he must have eaten of the forbidden tree; he has accused himself in his excuse.¹²⁷ He cannot deny it nor delay confession any longer. He begrudgingly admits his transgression, but not before prefacing his confession with another excuse - blame. The one he used as opportunity to sin in freedom became his excuse under judgment.¹²⁸ “The woman you put here with me” - he blames both the woman and God, pitting himself against and alienating himself from those who were intended to be appreciated as his closest companion and his

122. Brueggemann, *Genesis*, 49.

123. c.f. Scotchmer, “Lessons from Paradise,” 84.

124. Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall*, 82.

125. Bilezikian, *Beyond Sex Roles*, 37-38; Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 77.

126. Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall*, 79; Merriam-Webster Dictionary, s.v. “shame,” accessed October 10, 2018, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/shame>; Merriam-Webster Dictionary, s.v. “vulnerability,” accessed October 10, 2018, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/vulnerability?src=search-dict-hed>.

127. Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall*, 81-82.

128. Bilezikian, *Beyond Sex Roles*, 36, 38.

generous Creator.¹²⁹ The freedom previously limited to the care of the other and the obedience of God has been transgressed, and he resents the limit which he has exceeded.¹³⁰ Woman - an intended blessing from God and the merciful embodiment of freedom's limit - is no longer a miraculous grace, but an undeserved curse.¹³¹ Adam now views both the Creator Himself and His "good gift as the source of his trouble."¹³² The lens of love through which the man viewed his wife was removed, and she who was created as a treasure to be cherished becomes a possession to be exploited.¹³³ All in all, he claims that he was not really guilty; the woman was, God was, but not him.

The LORD moves on to question Eve, whose response is slightly more ambiguous as to who she implies is responsible. Whereas Adam clearly blamed both the woman and God, her response appears to both humbly admit personal error by confessing deception, and yet points blame to the snake for its part in it.¹³⁴ She does not necessarily take full and personal responsibility, but nevertheless, she knows she was deceived.¹³⁵ She shamefully recognizes that the promise of a wise and powerful divine likeness remains unfulfilled; for she is hitherto answering subserviently under the interrogation of the true God. In any case, she inadvertently convicts herself of failing to listen to God's relayed command, but rather submitting to the

129. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 77.

130. Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall*, 78.

131. Ibid.

132. Gaebelein, *Expositor's Bible Commentary*, 2:54.

133. Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall*, 78.

134. c.f. Bilezikian, *Beyond Sex Roles*, 39; c.f. Scotchmer, "Lessons from Paradise," 84; c.f. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 78.

135. c.f. Bilezikian, *Beyond Sex Roles*, 39; c.f. Scotchmer, "Lessons from Paradise," 84; c.f. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 78.

alluring voice of one outside her united fellowship with her husband and God.¹³⁶ The LORD then turns from the deceived to the deceiver - the snake - who is the only one to receive curse without trial.¹³⁷

At this point, the Creator's questions cease and sentences are given. In reverse order of address, each are held responsible and given their due consequences.¹³⁸ God prefaces both the serpent's and man's curses with "Because you... (3:14,17)," as they had not acknowledged their true downfalls. Woman, however, receives her consequences without the explicit reminder of her sin, for she had already admitted to deception.¹³⁹ Nonetheless, while the serpent receives a direct curse upon himself, humanity's consequences affect their relations with that which they came from and were called to - woman with man and man with ground.¹⁴⁰ Their tangible conflicts with their physical purposes are their visible reflections of their separation from the God whose image they were spiritually purposed to reflect.

Thus, the woman's consequences relate to the physical source of her being and identity (3:16).¹⁴¹ Both the blessing of marital unity with her husband and the fruit that proceeds from it will now be tainted by suffering.¹⁴² She is told that the pain associated with conception, pregnancy, and childbirth itself will multiply; and she is told she will "desire" her husband, but "he will rule over [her]." She will desire to return to "one flesh" and redeem original unity with

136. c.f. Bilezikian, *Beyond Sex Roles*, 34.

137. Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 92.

138. Scotchmer, "Lessons from Paradise," 84.

139. Bilezikian, *Beyond Sex Roles*, 40.

140. *Ibid.*, 41.

141. O'Connor, *Genesis 1-25a*, 66.

142. Gaebelein, *Expositor's Bible Commentary*, 2:56.

man,¹⁴³ yet it is implied that this desire will return void in multiple ways, suggested by both the words preceding it (related to bearing children) and the words that follow (in being ruled by her husband). For this desire for intimacy and mutual unity with her husband and the longing to satisfy him will often remain unfulfilled, countered by his exercise of dominion over her.¹⁴⁴ Yet, even in the moments of fulfilled desire - intimacy and unity actualized through sexual relations - she will experience pain with the offspring it produces. Through the severing of marital unity, desire is permanently united with pain.¹⁴⁵ Both her compulsive desire and its accompanying pain would ever remain strong.¹⁴⁶ In any case, this contrast of desire and dominion implies their marital relationship has disintegrated from personal and equal intimacy to the control of “instinctive urges passive and active.”¹⁴⁷ In other words, what was created to be an intimacy of personal connection and unity has now become a divided battle of individual cravings and impulses. Thus, in as a result of their sin, “those who were created to be one flesh will find themselves tearing each other apart.”¹⁴⁸ It is here, within these consequences, that the reality of all relational discord and estrangement between man and woman is birthed.¹⁴⁹ Woman’s physical, emotional, and relational pain began with her curse, and the harsh aggression of men and oppressively practiced patriarchy finds its roots at the fall.¹⁵⁰

143. Bilezikian, *Beyond Sex Roles*, 40-41.

144. O’Connor, *Genesis 1-25a*, 66.

145. Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall*, 84.

146. Scotchmer, “Lessons from Paradise,” 84.

147. Kidner, *Genesis: An Introduction*, 71.

148. Wenham, *Genesis*, 89.

149. Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall*, 84; Kidner, *Genesis: An Introduction*, 73.

150. Kidner, *Genesis: An Introduction*, 37; Brueggemann, *Genesis*, 54.

As for man's curse, before it is given, God is sure to note man's primary mistake: he listened to his wife and obeyed her words over God's personally mandated instructions.¹⁵¹ The man was with his wife as she was deceived, even as she twisted the words of God, yet the man did not correct her or even stand up for God's instructions.¹⁵² Instead of leading according to God's word, he was led by his wife's (as she was by the serpent's).¹⁵³ God is not saying it is inherently wrong to listen to his wife, but that it is wrong to submit to her in disobedience to God's Word.¹⁵⁴ On these grounds, man then receives his curse. Like the woman's, his consequences are aimed at his physical source of life and identity: the earth which he tends to.¹⁵⁵ His call to subdue the ground could never be fully accomplished now that the earth battled against him.¹⁵⁶ Furthermore, while plenty was freely given to him to eat at his beginning, his sustenance was now made much more difficult to obtain once he decided to eat what was *not* given to him – now he would have to endure hard labor against the ground for it.¹⁵⁷ Concluding his curse, just as the land was reversed from the condition it was created to be cursed instead of blessed, so man's life was inverted. He was made from the ground and given life, and now was to ultimately return to the ground in death.¹⁵⁸

151. Wenham, *Genesis*, 82.

152. Wenham, *Genesis*, 73; Walton, *Genesis: From Biblical Text*, 206.

153. Kidner, *Genesis: An Introduction*, 68.

154. Bilezikian, *Beyond Sex Roles*, 42.

155. O'Connor, *Genesis 1-25a*, 66; Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 94.

156. Kidner, *Genesis: An Introduction*, 72.

157. Gaebelein, *Expositor's Bible Commentary*, 2:56-57.

158. *Ibid.*, 2:57.

Immediately after the punishments are distributed, Adam exerts his first act of dominion over the woman. Just as Adam had named the animals as part of his rule over them, he now names his wife - Eve. As part of her curse, Adam now “rules over her and interprets her being[.]” for she does not have the privilege of naming him in return.¹⁵⁹ Nonetheless, there is glimpse of faith in the name - “mother of all the living (3:20)” - for there is a subtle reminder of the promise of her offspring to actualize the serpent’s curse (3:15).¹⁶⁰ In all this, there is hope that the evil serpent, who through the woman brought down man, will itself be brought down by a Man through the woman. Yet until such redemption, man and woman are no longer granted the grace of eternal paradise, but are removed from the garden to live on in acceptance of merciful suffering.¹⁶¹ In this, they will overcome.¹⁶²

Principles and Implications

In light of this study of humanity’s origins, the question is then raised: what are the overarching principles and implications for even the modern gender relation and marriage? What was purposed, and what was lost?

First of all, it must eternally be acknowledged that both man and woman are created in God’s image as equal partners. Their shared and primary call is to reflect the One in whose image they were created. For this fact alone, they are equal. Male and female together were given rule over the earth and all the blessings of creation. They together were given the creative process of fruitful multiplying, for it cannot not accomplished without both of them. Only after making both of them did God declared his creation to be “very good” (1:31). In the second and

159. O’Connor, *Genesis 1-25A*, 67.

160. Kidner, *Genesis: An Introduction*, 72.

161. Scotchmer, “Lessons from Paradise,” 85.

162. *Ibid.*

more elaborated creation account, humanity was implied to be incomplete until woman was made. Neither is of higher value; each of them are necessary in portraying the full image of God. Yet, though they are equal in the image of God, the physical expression of their spiritual purpose grants their uniqueness. Man, made in *Imago Dei*, is created from earth and then called to tend to the earth (or simply work) in obedience and fellowship of His Creator. Woman, made in *Imago Dei*, is formed out of man and is purposed to be his companion, supporter, and partner. In whatever task either gender undertakes in filling and subduing the earth, and fulfilling their purposes, they must faithfully represent the image of God in which they were both created.¹⁶³

Furthermore, through this creation account, God's image is expressed to be one of unity and community. Thus, it is not simply male and female individually made in God's image, but the community of marriage - man and woman joined as one - intended to be an expression of this image. Man is not ultimately fulfilled in anything he rules over, but in one who on his level in whom to confide, rest, and belong to. Woman is designed to meet that need. Woman is then fulfilled in the security, loving belonging, unity with him who she came from, when she is nurtured by him as his own flesh (2:23), not as *someone else*. They belong to each other and their freedom is to be used for the care and honor of the other, not grasping for power and selfish gain. All other human ties are severed for the sake of their unity. Yet, in modern times - where the significance of family has been surpassed by personal autonomy - a truer application of leaving *father and mother* could translate to leaving *individual self*.¹⁶⁴ For the sacrifice most presently required for divinely intended unity is that of personal rights, individual freedoms, and "self-

163. Hurley, *Man and Woman*, 32.

164. Scotchmer, "Lessons from Paradise," 83.

interest on the altar of intimacy, mutual trust, and fidelity.”¹⁶⁵ They are to give of themselves to the other. In this, they become one. This unity is the *Imago Dei* and the relation which God deemed “good.”

However, couples can choose to follow in the footsteps of the original husband and wife, neglecting to walk in the destiny the LORD God designed. They can choose to portray God’s communal and harmonious image on His terms, or they can deny what their Creator designates as good and attempt to define for themselves what they want to be “good,” grasping to exceed their limit of freedom in the other person, and thus, begrudging both God and their spouse in the process. Depending on which path they choose, humanity “will either glorify God by faithfully mirroring his relationship to creation and to people, or it will be a distortion of the truth and destructive both to the earth and to the race.”¹⁶⁶ Should they so choose to distort this image of God, there will arguably then be separation of what was intended to be united, shame where there was meant to be innocence and freedom, resentment where there was meant to be gratitude, and curse where there was meant to be blessing.

The reflection of such destruction has been seen since the beginning of time. Unified and selfless commitment is rejected, while fleeting personal pleasures are preferred. The value placed on individual fulfillment and success outside the home exceeds the perceived worth of the treasure within.¹⁶⁷ Rather than submitting to the single and true source of wisdom, the knowledge of good and evil makes way for individual and divisive designations of what is acceptable and

165. Scotchmer, “Lessons from Paradise,” 83.

166. Hurley, *Man and Woman*, 32.

167. Diane N. Lye and Timothy J. Biblarz, “The Effects of Attitudes Toward Family Life and Gender Roles on Marital Satisfaction,” *Journal of Family Issues* 14, no. 2 (June 1, 1993): 182, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/019251393014002002>.

what is not. This knowledge leads to the shame that imprisons both men and women to hide in their differences, feeling vulnerable to attack from the other, rather than secure in them. With the innate fear of being “exposed,” men may cover their insecurities with the fig leaves of work, the gym, their sense of humor, a TV screen, or the list goes on.¹⁶⁸ Women, for their insecurities of not being loved, may use either similar or varying metaphorical fig leaves - such as make-up, seduction, or even simple silence, for fear of being the burden *Adam* claimed her to be. Men, like Adam, may consider women as the source of all their problems, when they are meant to be one of God’s greatest gifts. The gratitude of men for the miracle made from them and gifted for them vanishes, and the demanding rights to possession take over.¹⁶⁹ Women, though created for companionship and helpfulness, may desire their independence or control from him who did not fight for her,¹⁷⁰ but may then be met with the husband’s fight against her and a demand for submission.¹⁷¹ Yet, her deeper need and soul’s yearning for the fulfillment of emotional companionship and sexual intimacy from her husband is countered with an exploiting and degrading dominion, whether sexual or otherwise.¹⁷² On the other hand, his allure towards her may supersede the truth of God until he passively follows her leading as she entices him into sin. He does not protect or fight for her, and neither of them stand up for God’s truth. The blame game goes around so no one is responsible for their own actions. All unity is lost. The two are no

168. Eldredge, *Wild at Heart*, 45, 52.

169. Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall*, 61.

170. Eldredge, *Wild at Heart*, 51.

171. Wenham, *Genesis*, 89.

172. Wenham, *Genesis*, 81. Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 93.

longer one. From the beginning of time in the book of Genesis, one finds “the mistrusts and passions which will ravage society.”¹⁷³

So how is the purposed unity by Genesis design expected to be redeemed to reflect the *Imago Dei* and to become one? Thankfully, through the New Testament teaching and Christological example, the revelation of divinely intended and reflected marital intimacy can be perceived.

173. Kidner, *Genesis: An Introduction*, 73.

THE NEW TESTAMENT ILLUMINATION

While a portrayal of how God created marriage and how sin affected its dynamics is given in Genesis, greater illumination on its practical principles for redemption are found through both the Christological narrative and apostolic teaching within the New Testament. The attempt of this chapter is to examine the explicit marital instructions alongside of their illustration in Christ, all in light of redeeming the Genesis unity. Although there are multiple New Testament passages that speak to marriage, this thesis specifically focuses on the passage of Ephesians 5:21-33 for both how it supplements the previous chapter's Genesis study of marital design and how Christ's relationship with His Church epitomizes and fulfills its principles for both husbands and wives.

Before the specific text can be explored, it is again vital to consider Ephesians' historical-cultural and literary context. The time and culture to which Paul is writing is one marked diversity and a variety theological and social views, including those related to social relations, the worship of multiple and varying deities, and the practices with which to serve their deities.¹⁷⁴ Thus, Ephesians is written to an equally diverse congregation: with likely members from male to female, slaves to elite, and from traditional Jews to former Roman priestesses.¹⁷⁵ The multiplicity of this audience thus necessitates the themes found in the letter, including cultural pressures and spiritual dynamics between Jews and Gentiles and other relationships, the practical instruction of identity and expected virtues for all who live in Christ, and spiritual warfare inherent in the lives of believers.¹⁷⁶ More specific issues of influence from their surrounding culture include a variety

174. Clinton E. Arnold, ed., *Ephesians*. Zondervan Exegetical Commentary Series: New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 30-33, 43-45, 378.

175. *Ibid.*, 379.

176. *Ibid.*, 43-45.

of views on women and marriage. Greek and Roman cultural influences valued women's involvement and independence, gave them growing opportunities, and suggested they needed not be subject to anyone.¹⁷⁷ However, the traditional Jewish views of male dominance and female inferiority were also alive and well.¹⁷⁸ These views placed little to no responsibility of husbands towards their wives, portrayed women as property of their husbands, and suggested women as a whole were inferior and subject to men.¹⁷⁹ In general, "the average Roman wife did not submit to her husband," and the average Jewish husband did not lovingly value his wife.¹⁸⁰ In any case, unity was lacking.¹⁸¹ Thus, among conflicting cultural pressures and within the overall themes of social relations and the spiritual expectations of believers is found the specific need to address gender relations and the marriage dynamic from a Christological perspective.¹⁸²

Ephesians 5:21-33

21 Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. **22** Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord. **23** For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. **24** Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything. **25** Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her **26** to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, **27** and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. **28** In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. **29** After all, no one ever hated their own body, but they feed and care for their body, just as Christ does the church— **30** for we are members of his body. **31** "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother

177. Arnold, *Ephesians*, 378; Jack J. Gibson, "Ephesians 5:21-33 and the lack of marital unity in the Roman empire," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 168, no. 670 (April 2011): 162-177, accessed November 18, 2017, <https://seu.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=rft&AN=ATLA0001835534&site=ehost-live&scope=site>.

178. Arnold, *Ephesians*, 379; Hurley, *Man and Woman*, 147.

179. Arnold, *Ephesians*, 383; Hurly, *Man and Woman*, 58-75. Gibson, "Ephesians 5:21-33," 170-172;

180. Gibson, "Ephesians 5:21-33," 174, 173.

181. *Ibid.*, 163-173.

182. Arnold, *Ephesians*, 379.

and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.” **32** This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church. **33** However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.

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This passage begins with the command to “submit to one another.” As the opening to an entire section on various relationships, this is vitally important and often misunderstood. The statement opens a section of Scripture that addresses the husband/wife, parent/child, and master/slave dynamics.<sup>183</sup> Some may argue that this command of mutual submission negates the interpretation of spiritual headship for the husband and submission for the wife, but being that the husband/wife instruction is parallel to the father/children and master/slave instructions that follow make it illogical to argue this mutual submission interpretation only for husbands and wives.<sup>184</sup> Furthermore, to understand the verb used for submit - *hypotassō* - as meaning a self-sacrificing of personal desires and needs for another’s sake is inconsistent with all other uses for the word in the New Testament.<sup>185</sup> It means “to put under” or “subordinate” to another, more often because of their position rather than inherent characteristics or worth.<sup>186</sup> Thus, the commands that follow are the reinforced - not negated - examples of how each are to submit themselves to each other, including the wives’ voluntary subordination, as well as “the husband’s love, the children’s obedience, the parents’ responsibility for their offspring, the slaves’ and masters’ attitude toward one another.”<sup>187</sup>

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183. Hurley, *Man and Woman*, 139-140.

184. *Ibid.*, 140.

185. *Ibid.*, 143-144.

186. Gaebelein, *Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, 11:75.

187. Markus Barth, ed., *Ephesians*, The Anchor Bible (Garden City: Doubleday, 1974), 34a:610.

The passage continues from this general mutual command into the specific address to the wives for submission. The verb for “submit” in the instruction for the wives does not actually appear in v. 22, but the meaning is carried over from the first sentence.<sup>188</sup> Nonetheless, the meaning is clear of the instruction for wives to submit or to put themselves under the headship of their own husbands in honor and respect, just as they do to the Lord. Some have argued that the Ephesians writer is only giving such instruction because of the influence of the surrounding patriarchal cultural context and have even suggested that his discernment of marriage was inherently flawed because of it.<sup>189</sup> However, a reference back to the above discussion of the surrounding culture shows how *countercultural* Paul’s instruction actually was. It is true that the patriarchal Jewish and Hellenistic culture would dictate all women were subordinate to all men, specifically their husbands and fathers, because they were inherently inferior.<sup>190</sup> However, to the Jewish and Hellenistic Christians, Paul’s command of submission was in fact a restriction of the extent to which women were subordinate - it is only to their own husbands, not to all men in general.<sup>191</sup> It is also qualified for the purpose of honoring Christ, not because she is inferior as Jewish culture would suggest.<sup>192</sup> On the other hand, by New Testament times, Roman culture had begun to give women more rights, status, and opportunities such as they could initiate

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188. Hurley, *Man and Woman*, 139.

189. Stephen C. Barton, "Marriage, family, the Bible and the gospel," *Theology* 119, no. 3 (May 2016): 163-171, accessed November 18, 2017, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0040571X15623690>; McFarland, "A Canonical Reading"; James R. Beck, "Mutuality in Marriage," *Journal of Psychology & Theology* 6, no. 2 (1978): 141, <https://seu.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=rfh&AN=ATLA0000766727&site=ehost-live&scope=site>.

190. Jack J. Gibson, "Ephesians 5:21-33," 168-173; Barth, *Ephesians*, 610-611; Hurley, *Man and Woman*, 58-75.

191. Barth, *Ephesians*, 610-611.

192. *Ibid.*, 620.

divorce and they could legally be independent and free from having to submit to their fathers or their husbands.<sup>193</sup> Thus, to the Romans, Christian women, though equal before Christ, were called to still submit in respect to their husbands, again, for the sake of Christ.<sup>194</sup> In all of this, Paul's instruction appeals not to his own culture, but to the unchanging revelation of Christ and His church. The wives' relationship with Christ, not their culture, was to be the lens through which they viewed their relation to their husbands.<sup>195</sup>

Therefore, in the same way that believing wives would trust and submit to Christ, they are then called to treat their husbands with that honoring trust and humble submission.<sup>196</sup> Yet, because it is defined by their relation to their Lord Jesus Christ, the wives' responsibility to their husbands is not greater than her responsibility to Christ - it does not supersede her obedience to Christ.<sup>197</sup> Furthermore, submission is for her to humbly and voluntarily give, not for the husband to domineeringly enforce.<sup>198</sup> Nonetheless, she is to relate to her husband with an attitude of respect and honor in order to nurture the divinely intended oneness of their marital union, as revealed in the Christ-church relationship.<sup>199</sup> Thus, in giving these instructions, Paul was not succumbing to the cultural views of the day, but rather completely modifying all cultural

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193. Hurley, *Man and Woman*, 75-78; Arnold, *Ephesians*, 378; Gibson, "Ephesians 5:21-33," 166.

194. Hurley, *Man and Woman*, 147.

195. *Ibid.*, 141.

196. Barth, *Ephesians*, 612.

197. Barth, *Ephesians*, 611-612; Hurley, *Man and Woman*, 147

198. Gaebelein, *Expositor's Bible Commentary*, 11:75; Arnold, *Ephesians*, 380; Hurley, *Man and Woman*, 147.

199. Beck, "Mutuality in marriage."

perspectives under the Genesis intention of marital unity (Eph. 5:31) and the revelation of Christ.<sup>200</sup>

The Ephesians writer now addresses husbands. If the wife is to honor her husband as she does the Lord, then he is called to reflect Christ towards her in their relationship, loving her as his own self. This headship is once again countercultural since, in New Testament times, wives were inferiorly expected to have responsibilities towards their husbands, but not vice versa.<sup>201</sup> However, Paul counters their social mindset by giving all the more instruction to the husband than he even does to the wife.<sup>202</sup> Furthermore, although he acknowledges the husband's leadership in the home, this instruction redefines society's understanding of leadership to be interpreted solely through the humble example of Christ Himself, setting quite a lofty standard.<sup>203</sup>

In opposition to the surrounding culture, this Christ-defined headship places new responsibilities on the husband for him to “agape” love his wife as Christ does the church, driven by selfless sacrifice rather than a desire for power.<sup>204</sup> While society would tell him to treat her as property, Christ calls him to love and care for her as his own body as Christ does for the church. In Gaebelein's words, “Christ loves the church, not simply as if it were his body, but because it is in fact his body. Husbands therefore are to love their wives, not simply as they love their own bodies, but as being one body with themselves, as indeed they are.”<sup>205</sup> The headship of Christ

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200. Arnold, *Ephesians*, 379; Gibson, “Ephesians 5:21-33,” 173-174.

201. Arnold, *Ephesians*, 383.

202. Ibid.

203. Barth, *Ephesians*, 618-619; Arnold, *Ephesians*, 383.

204. Gaebelein, *Expositor's Bible Commentary*, 11:76; Barth, *Ephesians*, 618-619.

205. Gaebelein, *Expositor's Bible Commentary*, 11:77.

over his body - the church - expresses itself in fostering her growth, nourishing her wellbeing, bringing her into unity with Himself and the Father, and building her up in strength and love.<sup>206</sup> Therefore, a husband's headship must be the same. He is never to selfishly demand fulfillment of his own desires; for he is not a tyrannical master and she is never his slave.<sup>207</sup> His call is to lead his wife according her own well-being, seeking to understand and fulfill her needs, being as in tune with her as he is to his own body, and empowering her to her fullest potential.<sup>208</sup> As Barth's commentary reads, "When a husband understands his manhood and headship in this Christological sense, he will consider it both a privilege and a grave responsibility. Even more than an enlightened monarch in his relation to his subjects, he is then 'the first servant' of his wife."<sup>209</sup> A husband is not to demand to be served, as his culture would dictate, but is to selflessly give himself up to serve his wife.<sup>210</sup> His stated responsibility, along with the wife's, is for the purpose of manifesting the unity of marriage as God designed it.<sup>211</sup> As the wives' contribution to this unity is selfless submission, so the husbands' is sacrificial service.<sup>212</sup>

While these instructional and revelational verses are often pulled out and discussed on their own, it is important to also note the bookends of text that surround this passage. In addition to the multiple references to unity throughout Ephesians, which further emphasize the purpose of

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206. Barth, *Ephesians*, 614.

207. Hurley, *Man and Woman*, 155.

208. Arnold, *Ephesians*, 383, 391, 407.

209. Barth, *Ephesians*, 618.

210. Hurley, *Man and Woman*, 147-148.

211. Beck, "Mutuality in marriage."

212. *Ibid.*

the text,<sup>213</sup> the specific passage's interpretation is also influenced by the references to the Spirit and spiritual warfare that both precede and follow it.<sup>214</sup> There can be two considerations drawn from these points. By giving the command to "be filled with the Spirit" (5:18) before the marital instructions, the implication is given that the power of the Holy Spirit is both necessary for and revealed in the fulfillment of God's design for marriage and family.<sup>215</sup> Along with this, the fact that the marital and household code is followed by an in-depth spiritual process for handling demonic warfare suggests that marriage and family is "one of the spheres of Satan's attack."<sup>216</sup> Thus, in regarding the Biblical marital relationship, the Holy Spirit is implied to be the only one who can successfully and triumphantly enable the interpretation of its purpose and the application of its practice.

#### *Genesis Correlation*

The intriguing aspect to Ephesians' marital insights are their relationship to the Genesis account of creation and fall of marital unity. In accordance with God's design, before the fall, man and wife were spiritually and divinely united before each other and before God. By His Spirit, He sustained the unity and harmony of their relationship.<sup>217</sup> Neither oppressive male rule nor an unnatural subjection to female submission were designated at the creation of man and woman before the fall, but rather they were fully and equally united as one.<sup>218</sup> While there may

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213. Eph. 1:10; 2:14-18; 4:3-6; 4:13; 5:31.

214. Arnold, *Ephesians*, 363-364.

215. c.f. Arnold, *Ephesians*, 363-364.

216. Arnold, *Ephesians*, 364.

217. Kidner, *Genesis: An Introduction*, 36.

218. Beck, "Mutuality in marriage," 143-144.

be an implication that Eve submitted to Adam as he was the one to have the first-hand knowledge of God and His command, the explicit designation of such a “role” was unnecessary, for it was naturally guised under the perfect trust, harmony, and oneness of their relationship.<sup>219</sup> Any leading on Adam’s would be more of a loving escortment, relaying the trusted Words of God and delightfully exploring with her the beauty of the garden they now shared.<sup>220</sup> Any submission from her was that of secure trust and loving admiration towards her partner and origin.<sup>221</sup> In mutual submission to God and equal rule over the earth, the two became one. In being one, they belonged to each other, living for the other rather than themselves, and in this they were fulfilled.<sup>222</sup> As they were right with God, they were right with each other.<sup>223</sup> All were in perfect unity.

However, influenced by the attack of the deceptive serpent, their decision to mutually disobey God’s designated command disrupted also God’s designed order; for without Him, their intended unity becomes impossible.<sup>224</sup> The interpretation and application of the marital relationship could only ever be selfishly skewed apart from their Creator’s participation.<sup>225</sup> Therefore, the very decision of mutually rejecting God and sacrificing their unified blessing became then their divisive curse, as trust and love turned to desire and dominion, and a united

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219. c.f. Bilezikian, *Beyond Sex Roles*, 26-32; c.f. Brueggemann, *Genesis*, 47.

220. P. B. Wilson, *Liberated Through Submission: The Ultimate Paradox* (Eugene: Harvest House Publishers, 1990), 53.

221. Wilson, *Liberated Through Submission*, 53.

222. Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall*, 60.

223. c.f. Kidner, *Genesis: An Introduction*, 36.

224. Kidner, *Genesis: An Introduction*, 36.

225. Ibid.

community disintegrated into divided individuals.<sup>226</sup> The previous fulfilled needs of love and respect in their unity became the curses of unmet longing and abusive rule in their division.<sup>227</sup> Now, they care only for obtaining their *selfish rights* for the other without joyfully fulfilling their *selfless responsibility* to the other.<sup>228</sup>

Thus, with such abuse and selfishness rampant in this sinful world, viewing Ephesians' marital instruction through a human lens - apart from the original divine design and the Christological precedent - is naturally accompanied with rejection, offense, and controversy.<sup>229</sup> The very divisive and detrimental effects seen from the fall are evident in the studies and discussions of this Ephesians' passage. For apart from the Spirit, when selfless responsibilities are abused, certainly individual rights are certainly preferred. The selfish tendency of men - indicated by Paul's intentional and thorough emphasis on the husband's call to sacrifice - has been evidenced throughout history, as men has often abused Ephesians' instructions as justification to control and rule over their wives.<sup>230</sup> This has understandably (though not rightfully) been countered by offense at this Ephesians passage by those who reject submission because of abuse in its name.<sup>231</sup> For with the curse of his rule ever so abusive, any trusting respect is defensively feared.<sup>232</sup> With the curse of her relentless desire ever unfulfilled, his love

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226. Kidner, *Genesis: An Introduction*, 71; Brueggemann, *Genesis*, 48.

227. c.f. Emerson Eggerichs, *Love & Respect: The Love She Most Desires, The Respect He Desperately Needs* (Nashville: W Publishing Group, 2004), 6; c.f. Kidner, *Genesis: An Introduction*, 36.

228. Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall*, 78; c.f. Brueggemann, *Genesis*, 48.

229. c.f. Arnold, *Ephesians*, 401.

230. Arnold, *Ephesians*, 404, 401.

231. *Ibid.*, 401.

232. c.f. Gen. 3:16; c.f. Eggerichs, *Love & Respect*, 6.

feels unappreciated and useless.<sup>233</sup> Thus, the negative connotations of Paul's words could naturally lead one to assume that he must certainly be simply succumbing to his own patriarchal culture to give such a command. In other words, when the submission and headship roles are taken out of context and misinterpreted as ends to themselves solely based on gender, it is far too convincing to reject them as the meaningless inequality of an unjust and outdated society. Thus, anyone who stands firm on the structure of marriage roles set forth in Ephesians without acknowledging the purpose of unity and the precedent of Christ is as deceived as anyone who rejects the passage of Scripture altogether.

However, when rightly interpreted by the Holy Spirit through the Genesis creation account and the Christological revelation, it is clear that there is nothing culturally bound and inherently oppressive about the designated husband and wife relationship. Paul is sensitive to the abuse of power, and expresses that both headship and submission must be approached from a Christian theological standpoint.<sup>234</sup> The roles are not set for themselves for nothing more than hierarchical human structure, but rather are intended as the process back to the designed unity of Genesis 2.<sup>235</sup> Thus, there is delight in this ever relevant uniting process because of the peaceful and secure harmony and oneness that it redemptively brings.

Yet, not only are Paul's spiritual revelation of the marital relationship and his reference to Gen. 2:24 intended to redeem the originally designed unity, but it provides it new meaning as it takes on the expression of Christ and the Church.<sup>236</sup> The instructions are not merely a structure as

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233. c.f. Gen. 3:16; c.f. Eggerichs, *Love & Respect*, 6.

234. Hurley, *Man and Woman*, 147.

235. Beck, "Mutuality in marriage," 142.

236. Arnold, *Ephesians*, 393-397.

an end to itself, or even simply the process to reclaim humanity's unity of Genesis 2 - for, in these cases, they would be either utterly oppressive at worst or fleeting and unnecessary at best. Rather, they are the ultimate portrayal of the eternal unity of Christ with His bride.<sup>237</sup> As part of the new covenant, since human marriage will no longer exist following Christ's return, marriage exists in the "already" but "not yet" portion of God's plan, and in this, is purposed to reflect the eternal and ultimate marital unity of Christ and His Bride.<sup>238</sup> Paul uses the example of Christ and the church to describe the unity intended within a marriage, and the unity of a husband and wife is intended to in turn be displayed as a metaphor for the unity between Christ and the church.<sup>239</sup> Thus, according to this Ephesians passage, the relationship of Christ and the Church is both the "archetype" and the "illustration" of the ever intended unity of the human marriage relationship.<sup>240</sup> While the Ephesians author notes he is discussing Christ and the Church, this does not negate the truth and relevance of the insight and instructions for the man and woman marital union. Rather, he explains that regardless of the audience's understanding of the greater metaphor and purpose, they are still to follow the process given for relational unity - submission and love.<sup>241</sup> However, for those who do grasp both the incredible grace of redeeming the paradisiacal harmony and the valuable responsibility of reflecting the divine and eternal Christ-church unity, how delightful it is to embrace the process of Ephesians' marital revelation.

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237. Beck, "Mutuality in marriage," 142; Arnold, *Ephesians*, 394, 397.

238. c.f. Curle, "Towards a Theology," 121-130.

239. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson, *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 828; c.f. Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall*, 63.

240. Barth, *Ephesians*, 613.

241. Gaebelein, *Expositor's Bible Commentary*, 11:78-79.

In all of this, the responsibilities that husbands and wives are called to fulfill by the Spirit are not unlike what came naturally in the first divinely-appointed and Spirit-led unity of marriage. The man's rule designated in the curse reverts back to the harmonious and gracious leading by escortment according to the woman's needs and delights.<sup>242</sup> The woman's subjection to dominion appointed by the curse returns to the secure trust in the one whose primary motivation is appreciation and primary goal is nurture and care for her as his own "bone of [his] bone and flesh of [his] flesh" (Gen. 2:23). In following the revealed example of Christ, the husband is not to lord over her and demean her, but is given the weighty obligation to sacrifice his life for his bride, caring for her as his own body, encouraging and nurturing her in herself and her walk with God - a call so lofty that when gone unfulfilled, his prayers go unanswered.<sup>243</sup> Acknowledging his great responsibility to her before the Lord, the Christian wife trustfully, humbly, and willingly submits to her husband.<sup>244</sup> It is not that she views herself as inferior, but acknowledges the call to delightfully uplift her husband, respect, him, honor him, and submit to him as she would to Christ.<sup>245</sup> They recognize their oneness and belonging to each other, and the vulnerability of spiritual, emotional, and physical nakedness leaves no shame in their mutual security in Christ.<sup>246</sup> Yet, neither their individual responsibilities nor the oneness they share are possible apart from the active influence of the Holy Spirit.<sup>247</sup> In all this, they both reflect back on

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242. c.f. Wilson, *Liberated Through Submission*, 53; c.f. Arnold, *Ephesians*, 406.

243. 1 Pet. 3:7.

244. Gaebelien, *Expositor's Bible Commentary*, 11:76.

245. Hurley, *Man and Woman*, 149.

246. Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall*, 61-63.

247. c.f. Kidner, *Genesis: An Introduction*, 36; Arnold, *Ephesians*, 364.

the originally expressed unity and reflect forward to its eternal manifestation in Christ. In this, they are one.

Therefore, the ultimate purpose of these responsibilities is realized not when they are simply acted out, but rather when they successfully foster the very unity that God intended for marriage back in Genesis and designed to be accomplished eternally through Christ and the Church - “the two shall become one flesh.” In such a divine and Spirit-led union which redeems the harmony lost in the fall, husbands and wives honor and care for each other as they would for themselves - as one. They no longer grasp as Adam and Eve did for selfishly attempting to usurp God’s status and glory; such grasping leads to death.<sup>248</sup> Rather, they follow the example of Christ, who did not consider “equality with God a thing to be *grasped*,”<sup>249</sup> but rather humbly surrendered His rights and even His life for unity with God and humanity.<sup>250</sup> When viewed through such an example of Christ, the calls to love and submission cannot possibly be met with offense by Spirit-filled men and women, but rather graciously accepted as a privileged participation in the image and reflection of Christ towards His divine purpose of unity. It is not only heavy responsibility in the sacred and spiritual union, but it is also quite “graciously designed for mutual satisfaction and delight.” For just as Christ is honored and the church is blessed and loved when in right relationship, so the husband and wife are most fulfilled when serving one another in perfect harmony. Therefore, when rightly interpreted and practiced through the lens of the original paradisiacal unity found in Genesis 1-2, as well as the greater revelation and reflection of Christ which informs it, the designated order of relationship found in

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248. Brueggemann, *Genesis*, 34.

249. Phil. 2:6 (ESV). Italics added.

250. c.f. Phil. 2:3-8; c.f. Brueggemann, *Genesis*, 34.

Ephesians becomes both an encouraging blessing of divine redemption and an invigorating purpose of divine reflection.

## CONCLUSION

It is ever interesting to observe the beauty of ballroom dance. Two individual souls float across the floor with oneness of motion and expression, often reflecting a grander story of intriguing romance. While in theory, the gentleman is graciously leading his lady through the dance, when both are familiar with the dance and ever trusting of each other, the outside world can never tell there even is a leader. For if he leads, it is to escort her into her most beautiful and marvelous expression where she is beautifully glorified as the stunning star. If she submits, it is to the one whom she trusts to guide her according to her potential, safety, and glory. For they are one. It is beautiful. Where he dominates her for his own glory and cares not to nurture her desires of expression, or where she decides to usurp the dance according to her will, the dance falls sorely awry. The waltz goes unaccomplished: for the couple is disgruntled, the portrayal is disheartening, and any audience is unsatisfied.

However, when the two partners contribute and submit humbly to the movements, expression, and glory of the other, the result is radiantly exquisite. For it is not only accomplished in the pleasing and enjoyment of each other, but the audience who observes is delighted and moved in spirit and emotion. The story is not simply that of the couple, but of all of them. All is well. All is fulfilled.

How beautiful is this reality in the design and expression of a divinely inspired marriage union. God's ultimate desire for marriage was complete and utter oneness - "the two become one" (Gen. 2:24). The utmost satisfaction in marriage is in the reality of the two belonging to one another, securely trusting and unashamedly vulnerable, knowing they are safe. "I am my beloved's and my beloved is mine" (Song of Sol. 6:3). And yet, the greatest fulfillment is not simply in the finite extent of pure human satisfaction, but in the eternal revelation of the greatest

possible romance in all of history - the love of Christ Jesus and His precious bride. For the Christian message is hope, and it's story is the Gospel. How dare our marriage forsake our message.<sup>251</sup> The Christian marriage is the one whose dance is a display of perfect unity and a portrayal of the greatest romance. For this was intended purpose from the beginning of creation - divine unity. When those within the marital covenant are led by the Holy Spirit and prioritize unity above all as their goal, the intellectual arguments of complementarianism and egalitarianism remain relevant merely in scholarship and academia; for their ultimate end is not goals or process, but completely oneness.<sup>252</sup> Yet, the world has lost its purpose and fallen into the divisive traps of the devil who seek not only to destroy marital unity, but ultimately it's greater revelation in the Gospel. Nonetheless, in exploring the resplendent beauty of marital beginnings, acknowledging the divisive destruction of its fall, and embracing the wisdom of its redemptive process and eternal revelation found in Ephesians, the Christ-following and Spirit-led couple can finally glimpse the fulfillment of their divine Creator's transcendent purpose - "the two shall become one."

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251. Gary L. Thomas, *Sacred Marriage: What If God Designed Marriage to Make Us Holy More Than to Make Us Happy?* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 34.

252. c.f. Walton, *Genesis: From Biblical Text*, 190.

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