

The Henotic Relationship

One Rib, One Flesh,
One Man, One Woman, One Marriage?
A Biblical Study in Oneness.

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Then the Lord God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man. The man said, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman,' for she was taken out of man." That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh. Adam and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame. - Genesis 2:22-25

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Introduction.....	2
Oneness.....	3
The Lost Meaning.....	5
Getting Off.....	8
No Emotional Baggage.....	12
A Pure Humanity.....	13
Alternative Marriage.....	14
The First Couple.....	15
A Rib.....	16
Unmatched Integrity.....	17
A Eulogy to All Things Natural.....	20
The Second Adam.....	22
Healthy Christians.....	25
Christ, The Perfect Man.....	29
The First Wedding.....	33
Love.....	37
A Man's Need.....	41
Intimacy.....	43
One Flesh.....	45
Marriage The Modern Way.....	46
Other Relations.....	48
Conclusion.....	50
Works Cited.....	51

Introduction

This work is a brief look at Genesis 2:24 which is a treasure of meaning in a short verse.

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

To be more precise, what is the meaning of the phrase “one flesh”? How might we come to appreciate its value theologically and in our modern relations?

The male anglerfish in a literal sense, after fertilizing the female’s eggs, bites into her side (she being much larger than he) and there he swims, physically welded after his bite “heals,” a part of her, visible only as an extra fin, for the remainder of his life. The National Geographic called it “a weirdly clingy side” explaining, “after finding a female, the male black devil angler latches on and never lets go!”¹

There are better translations of the word “united”² in our verse. The King James’ translation “cleave” which is more accurate if less technical—reminds me of an old german translation I once read “*klebt an seine Frau*” (glued to his wife).³

And quickly: man cleaves to woman—not the other way around. Are the genders not interchangeable?⁴

¹ <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/animals/fish/group/anglerfish/>

² glued - קָדַדְ

³ This Lutheran translation is lost to me now since I cannot find it on the web and I must have given my copy away.

⁴ In the Old Testament economy men divorced women never the opposite.

The Henotic Relationship: A Biblical Study in Oneness 3

The King James' use of a future "*shall cleave*" is not accurate. This is a state of being which in the dynamic of the Hebrew language somehow speaks of a completed event, "*is united.*" The Christian Standard gets closer: "*bonds with his wife, and they become one.*" I like the English Standard Version: The man shall "*hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.*" There is no letting go in this verse! Letting go is my euphemism for divorce, something God came to "*hate*"⁵

"*Guard your spirit,*" the Lord warns,⁶ against breaking this bond.

This single verse is like studying the Mandelbrot: a captivating fractal that draws you deeper into its design but only revealing the same. "*One flesh,*" in like fashion, the closer we look, the fuller and more real the "*one*"ness. To "*cleave and become one*" must speak of a relationship that parallels the mathematical beauty of the Mandelbrot, an infinite and eternal design for marriage that has no fissure to discover, no matter how deep we go searching into this awe-inspiring love relationship between Adam and his Eve.

Oneness

"*One*" in Greek is the word "*hen*" which is why I call this the "*henotic relationship.*" Yet, "*One flesh*" is not monogamy, per se. Second and third marriages may maintain monogamy but may not necessarily exemplify the henotic relationship. This is worth studying more closely. If we sacrifice

⁵ Malachi 2:16 "For I hate divorce!" says the LORD, the God of Israel. [NLT] The NIV is for me a poor translation, after the LXX: ἀλλὰ ἐὰν μισήσας ἐξαποστειλῆς λέγει κύριος ὁ θεὸς τοῦ Ἰσραὴλ. "if thou shouldest hate thy wife and put her away (divorce her) ...ungodliness shall cover thy thoughts." That's a discussion for another day.

⁶ Malachi 2:16b

The Henotic Relationship: A Biblical Study in Oneness 4

the former, monogamy, we have sacrificed the latter, the "Henosis" or oneness of the marriage relationship. Oneness is monogamous but monogamy may not be henotic. So studying "oneness" is a study into a biblically recognized form of monogamy.

The Lost Meaning

What makes any principle of Scripture easier to understand is the pure repetition of the truth it represents in varying contexts and with different players in the drama that highlights it. This retelling of any truth in a word or phrase or verse sheds light on its meaning whereas anything written only once continues to stay somewhat clouded in mystery.

A simple example: 1 Co 14:27 reads in the NIV: *“If anyone speaks in a tongue, two—or at the most three—should speak, **one at a time**, and someone must interpret.”* The phrase “one at a time” in the NIV is translated⁷ “one after the other” or “each in turn” in other translations. But does it really mean this? If it meant “one by one” why didn’t Paul say that here as he had a few verses on⁸ about prophesying which makes perfect sense. And if “in turn” means “one at a time” why let up to three people speak “at a time[?]”. The actual Greek phrase is found nowhere else in Scripture.

Genesis 2:24 represents a Biblical idea not mentioned again until Jesus pushing back against Pharisaic ignorance on divorce quoted Genesis:

⁷ ἀνα μέρος

⁸ | Corinthians 14:31 καθ' ενα

The Henotic Relationship: A Biblical Study in Oneness 6

"Haven't you read," he replied, "that at the beginning the Creator 'made them male and female,' and said, 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh'?"⁹

Mark added¹⁰

So they are no longer two, but one flesh.

Paul's understanding of the marriage bond was allegorical for the bond between Christ and His church.¹¹ Christ and His church are "One."¹²

Paul's explanation of "one flesh," however, approached a literal interpretation rather than anything metaphorical. Your spouse is part of *you!* And

"no one ever hated their own body, but they feed and care for their body,"¹³

In fact, we are to consider marriage as God ordained because it represents a type of His relationship with us!

...what God has joined together...¹⁴

⁹ Matthew 19:4-5

¹⁰ Mark 10:8

¹¹ Ephesians 5:32 This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church.

¹² John 17:22 I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one

Ephesians 4:5-6 One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.

¹³ Ephesians 5:29

¹⁴ Matthew 19:6

The Henotic Relationship: A Biblical Study in Oneness 7

A believer with an active prayer life might begin to appreciate such a closeness to the Divine, a oneness in spirit and thought, purpose, and desire, but then Paul says the unexpected.

Paul takes us back into a fog when we were beginning to see more clearly what “one flesh” might mean. In his admonition to Corinthian believers who were visiting the local brothels (a non-christian practice the Corinthians brought over from Greek culture) Paul argued a warning to stop it! ...and he used Genesis 2:24 for his text!

Do you not know that he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her in body? For it is said, “The two will become one flesh.”¹⁵

Here’s how I see Paul: There is no closer relationship or more intimate a union than one between a man and woman in coital embrace. So to assume that a moment of passion has no consequence to memory or desire, that prostitution or (in today’s parlance) having “an affair” is like a Las Vegas encounter—what happens in Vegas stays in Vegas [?]-is, if I may be so bold to say, a most damaging self-deception. For a man to “glue himself, emotionally, to a woman (and a woman to a man) means that the breaking apart of that relationship to make it a forgotten and forgiven past will never be “clean.” There will always be something residual, some impression, maybe a suppression, that will tear at the soul’s quest for innocence, a desire to begin again, a clean break with a regrettable mistake. The purity of the marriage union is stained indelibly by such behavior even though many learn to cope with the memory.

Some do not see this behavior as a “mistake.”¹⁶

¹⁵ I Corinthians 6:16

¹⁶ The biblical Greek word for “sin” means “mistake” in the Classics.

Getting Off

In Season 2 of the TV series, “The Good Wife,” in episode 22, “Getting Off,” in which Julianna Margulies plays Alicia Florrick and Sarah Silverman, Stephanie Engler, a conversation about monogamy was scripted—my guess—in support of the modern approach to an “open” marriage:.

If monogamy is culturally discouraged, as here in this scene, it seems true that the henotic relationship is not seen as something achievable, or sought after. Oneness or “one flesh” is a type of a monogamous union in marriage. Stephanie in this scenario saw her marriage relationship, not as a shared intimacy with one partner but, as a casual form of adult relationship with many.

Stephanie: *Monogamy is unnatural. It forces the body to do something it's not meant to do.*

Alicia: *Be committed?*

Stephanie: *No, be monogamous.*

Alicia: *So, you cheated on your husband.*

Stephanie: *It's not cheating. We know exactly where we are; we know exactly who we're dating.*

Alicia: *And your husband approves?*

Stephanie: *Not only does he approve, I approve when he wants to date someone.*

Alicia: *So if having an affair keeps a marriage from being based on a lie, why do you have a panic button on your website? ..that allows the reader to hide the page from anyone from looking at it.*

Stephanie: *Because you don't have to share my philosophy....*

There is also the argument brought forth that any one person needs more than only one other person to supply everything she or he needs. It is argued that one relationship alone cannot provide all the "help" a marriage partner might need. This type of behavior is tied to a search for happiness; so, if you are happy with more than one partner, you must be doing something right.

The Story of Eden challenges this assumption. God took a *single* rib to provide for Adam the "helper" he needed.¹⁷ The language suggests Eve was *his* help, the part of him that was taken and now returned to make him whole. Eve was capable of supplying any and all his emotional need(s) through the marriage union. God would supply the rest.

And what about Eve's needs!? Is there not in this metaphor of a "rib" that she had emotionally returned "home" to the place she belonged and to a *shared intimacy*? It is possible

¹⁷ Genesis 2:18 עֵזֶר כְּנֶגְדּוֹ

The Henotic Relationship: A Biblical Study in Oneness 10

through giving, *she* receives; through providing for Adam, *her* needs are provided for. It defines a love relationship which we need to look at more closely later on. (There is nothing in this language that suggests she is not Adam's equal. That question was debated after they discovered what evil was.)

Is such an intimacy possible among multiple lovers?

No. The word "intimate" speaks of a privacy shared between just *two* persons. If the Genesis narrative pre-supposes only one man and one woman in this story of origins, it stands to conclude that something is happening here behind closed doors that belongs to these two only.

Abram Maslow¹⁸, in studying healthy relationships, found that:

*The desire for intimacy is not only physical but also psychological. It expresses itself frequently as a special taste for privacy. In addition to this, I have observed often the growth in a pair who love each other of a secret language, secret sexual words other people cannot understand,*¹⁹

It is, therefore, if this be so, proper to assume that while Adam and Eve lived together in Eden, they would not have shared Stephanie's philosophy. But, we must add, Adam and Eve had no such temptation. (Only one rib was removed.) Eve

¹⁸ Abraham Harold Maslow was an American psychologist who was best known for creating Maslow's hierarchy of needs, a theory of psychological health predicated on fulfilling innate human needs in priority, culminating in self-actualization. Maslow was a psychology professor at Alliant International University, Brandeis University, Brooklyn College, New School for Social Research, and Columbia University. He stressed the importance of focusing on the positive qualities in people, as opposed to treating them as a "bag of symptoms." A Review of General Psychology survey, published in 2002, ranked Maslow as the tenth most cited psychologist of the 20th century. - WIKI

¹⁹ Maslow, *Motivation and Personality*. p. 188.

was Adam's sole [or should I say, "soul"] helper. So, I ask: what did *one flesh* mean experientially to them?

No Emotional Baggage

What advances our interest is: this verse was a commentary on Adam and Eve prior to the introduction of evil.

I must assume our first parents were at the very least “perfect” human beings, that is, no emotional baggage but healthy personalities with a love that probably is less likely in the sinful world we live in.

And somewhere in this brief work we must talk about psychological and emotional nakedness. Theirs was more than physical and this was something lost to the first evil they discovered upon eating the forbidden fruit: *shame!*

A Pure Humanity

Another question of interest is which characteristics might be called “human” and which are “spiritual” or Godly? Was their love a gift of creation God planned for all mankind or a reflection of His self²⁰ ...or both! Was the erotic element of their relation a separate kind of love (as we conclude in today’s relationships)? ..or in the purity of their relationship love was simply love?

²⁰ | John 4:8 God is love.

Alternative Marriage

On the fringe of this study are LGBTQ issues which I think are unintentionally addressed in Genesis 2:24. I should consider these, not in terms of the injunctions in Leviticus and Deuteronomy nor as a study of Paul's censorship in Romans but, in terms of the meaning of "one flesh."

The First Couple

Adam and Eve had to be the perfect couple, that is, they were emotionally, psychologically, and physically healthy—before, that is, discovering the evil that befell them eating forbidden fruit. The assumption we make is that healthy people who are in love are in a position to have a closeness and intimacy, a biblical oneness, on every level of their being: mentally, emotionally, as well as physically.

In Maslow's terms: their love was a "B-love."²¹ They loved each other for who they were not for what they provided. They found meaningful anything and everything about each other. Each found the other a delightful mystery, a continuing discovery of what brought life and meaning to them as individuals and together. Their love was not a D-love, a deficiency love,²² or what C. S. Lewis called a 'need-love'²³ or a need to be loved. Adam loved Eve for herself and she, him. Their embrace was not a need to be hugged as much as that romantic excitement of the pure enjoyment of holding and being held.²⁴

²¹ Being-love

²² Maslow, *Motivation and Personality*, p. 198

Maslow *Toward a Psychology of Being*. pp. 42-43 for the differentiation between B-love and D-love.

²³ Need-love, like all our impulses, can be selfishly indulged. A tyrannous and gluttonous demand for affection..." Lewis. p. 13.

²⁴ As Overstreet wrote, "The love of a person, implies not the position of the person, but the affirmation of that person. It means granting him, gladly, the full right to his (or her) unique manhood (womanhood)." — *Immature mind*. New York. Norton, 1949 Page 103

A Rib

When Adam called Eve “*bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh*”²⁵ he went beyond the simple wording or language applauding God for His genius or in recognition that Eve had been part of his own body. She was not just a bone taken from him. She was “*flesh of my flesh.*” She was not a vestigial part of him that could be discarded but a part that he needed in order to be complete, to be well, psychologically and emotionally, to be whole again. Said plainly: A rib in the Hebrew, Harrison informs us, was “*an aspect of the personality.*”²⁶ Eve, by God’s design for the marriage union, would become, again, a part of Adam! Because Eve came from him, she would be returned to him. Two separate personalities melded into one—“one flesh.”

The context of their relationship, it is worth mentioning, was a perfect couple in a perfect environment. Sin had not yet been introduced into this pristine picture. They were “upright” of heart,²⁷ to recall a Biblical phrase that we suggest sets the scene.

²⁵ Genesis 2:23

²⁶ Harrison, pp. 555-556. The Genesis narrative dealing with the creation of woman has invariably been misrepresented in such versions as those which translate the Hebrew word *עֲצָבָה* as “rib.” The word carries a number of meanings and in Genesis 2:21f, *עֲצָבָה* means “an aspect of the personality,” and not a skeletal rib, as commonly imagined.

²⁷ Psalm 32:11

Unmatched Integrity

Uprightness of heart, in terms of personality, is an unmatched integrity. Sin would indelibly stain the purity our first parent's enjoyed. We needed the Savior!

Integrity²⁸ is an Old Testament word that somehow incorporates the qualities of *wholeness, blamelessness, truth, innocence*²⁹ and an overarching idea, *simplicity*. This is someone who is not deceptive or duplicitous, or in relation with God, one who walks "uprightly."

*LORD, who may dwell in your sacred tent? Who may live on your holy mountain? The one whose walk is **blameless**, who does what is righteous, who speaks the truth from their heart;*³⁰

Healthy people are persons who need not hid who they are. They are not ashamed of who they are. They live without self-blame and without shame. In the secrecy of their own thoughts, they are the same persons who speak to the world. They live a simple life, not deceiving themselves and their world about them. They are not hypocritical, pretending to be someone they are not, or boasting achievements based on lies. They are not self-deceived nor have to live their lives in self-introspection to keep the lie going or because they have lost sight

תמיים²⁸

²⁹ Maslow suggests: "most childlike" - Maslow, Motivation & Personality p. 179

³⁰ Psalm 15:1-2

of who they really are. In a biblical word: they are “upright in heart.”³¹

*Now therefore fear the LORD and serve him in **sincerity** and in faithfulness. — Joshua 24:14 English Standard Translation*

Adam and Eve were, before the fruit incident, persons of such integrity. Taking a closer look: they could afford to parade naked³² in front of each other, to expose their emotional vulnerabilities before each other with a spontaneous—childlike—abandonment without fear of rejection, ridicule, or being mocked. It isn’t just being disrobed physically but expressing bare emotions and passions and a loving boldness in verbalizing their feelings for each other.

They were people of unmatched integrity. By integrity, we mean four traits:

1. Total openness and honesty without using craft, lies, flattery or deception to obtain an end they think cannot be obtained honestly.
2. A transparency in which reputation and character are the same. They are the same in the secrets of their own thoughts as they are in open discourse. They are who you see them to be if you are capable of truthful perception.
3. They are sensitive, considerate, persons of empathic understanding. They are capable of listening with concern. And forgiving with impunity, a childlike trait.
4. They are accountable persons, taking responsibility where appropriate which is another aspect of their honesty and transparency. They make mistakes but penitence is natural. They do not project fault on

³¹ Psalm 32:11 Rejoice in the LORD and be glad, you righteous; sing, all you who are upright in heart!

³² Genesis 2:25 Adam and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.

another, rationalize away poor choices as if they were planned or good, nor do they live with crushing guilt or self-blame.

A Eulogy to All Things Natural

Yet, what we know about Adam and Eve is knowledge post-fall, when their nakedness was embarrassing, when they began projecting their personal blame on another: Adam on Eve, and Eve on the snake. After that first bite, they showed themselves perfectly human but no longer perfect humans. We have only a flickering glimpse of the Eden story of their bliss. They lived, we know not how long, in a garden of pleasure which God planted but in that fatal first bite lost its beauty and the fragrant zephyr it gave as a romantic ambience to their natural first home. Flowers once owned as wild and free scattered in the fields they played, became weeds, thistles and thorns. Now the rose dies.

We can only regale in epic verse the joy that once was the First couple's. John Milton,³³ said it best:

Simplicitee and spotless innocence.
So passd they naked on, nor shund the sight
Of God or Angel, for they thought no ill:
So hand in hand they passd, the lovliest pair
That ever since in loves imbraces met,
ADAM the goodliest man of men since borne
His Sons, the fairest of her Daughters EVE.
Under a tuft of shade that on a green
Stood whispering soft, by a fresh Fountain side
They sat them down, and after no more toil
Of thir sweet Gardning labour then suffic'd
To recommend coole ZEPHYR, and made ease

³³ John Milton, England's renown epic poet, second only to Shakespeare.

More easie, wholsom thirst and appetite
More grateful, to thir Supper Fruits they fell,
Nectarine Fruits which the compliant boughes
Yeilded them, side-long as they sat recline
On the soft downie Bank damaskt with flours:
The savourie pulp they chew, and in the rinde
Still as they thirsted scoop the brimming stream;
Nor gentle purpose, nor endearing smiles
Wanted, nor youthful dalliance as beseems
Fair couple, linkt in happie nuptial League,³⁴

³⁴ Book IV 318-339 Paradise Lost. John Milton.

The Second Adam

But what did they experience as “one flesh” while living in Eden? We don’t know! We met them just outside the gate of Eden where an angel guarded the secrets of the place from their memory and from us. We would have cherished the opportunity to linger with them in Eden in Biblical narrative but it was not to be. Ah! But we have the Last Adam,³⁵ Christ. And He is to become “one flesh” with His church.³⁶

The “church” is seen as a spiritual body and no one would take Paul’s analogy with marriage literally. (There is no marriage in heaven.)³⁷ A physical union is not the point, but at the same time, the marriage bond represents the eternal union between Christ and His church when we become “one” with *Him*. We, who are part of that “church” ought surely to have some idea what being one with Christ must mean!

Oneness with Christ, according to Paul, is represented by the marriage bond of 2 healthy and mature individuals who over the span of a lifetime in relationship “become one flesh.” Are we not saying: in spiritual terms God...purposes to conform [His bride] “to the image of his Son...”³⁸?

It isn’t a stretch to see the believer’s transformation in conformity with the very nature of Christ as a henotic relationship in which the believer or the Bride of Christ begins to

³⁵ 1 Corinthians 15:45 So it is written: “The first man Adam became a living being”; the last Adam, a life-giving spirit.

³⁶ Ephesians 5:32 ...a profound mystery —but I am talking about Christ and the church.

³⁷ Matthew 22:30 At the resurrection people will neither marry nor be given in marriage; they will be like the angels in heaven.

³⁸ Romans 8:29

reflect the very Glory that is Christ's.³⁹ Such a transformation is an essential and permanent change⁴⁰ not just an outward manifestation or a semblance.⁴¹ For the believer as the Bride of Christ there is anticipated a renewed mind,⁴² a new perspective, a new reasoning, a new understanding of all things pertaining to the Savior.

Since the "Fall" there has been a clash between the natural mind of man and the mind of Christ. "...the concerns of God," and "human concerns"⁴³ come into conflict. This tension will be removed when we "become one"⁴⁴ with Him.

Oneness with Christ, through a developing and maturing relationship with Christ, is, therefore, an inner

³⁹ 2 Corinthians 3:18 And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate [reflect] the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

⁴⁰ Thayers. p. 406

⁴¹ The distinction between them comes out very clearly [between] μετασχηματίζω [transfigured or conformed] and μεταμορφώω [transformed]. Thus if I were to change a Dutch garden into an Italian, this would be [the first]: but if I were to transform a garden into something wholly different; as into a city, this would be [the latter]. It is possible for Satan [to transfigure] himself into an angel of light (2 Cor. 11: 14); he can take the whole outward semblance of such. But to any such change of his it would be impossible to apply the transformation: for this would imply a change not external but internal, not of accidents but of essence, which lies quite beyond his power. How fine and subtle is the variation of words at Rom. 12: 2; though 'conformed' and 'transformed' in our Translation have failed adequately to represent it. 'Do not fall in,' says the Apostle, 'with the fleeting fashions of this world, nor be yourselves fashioned to them (transfigured, conformed), but undergo a deep abiding change (transformed) by the renewing of your mind, such as the Spirit of God alone can work in you' (cf. 2 Cor. 3. 18). - Trench. Pp. 263-264

⁴² Romans 12:2 ...transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

⁴³ Matthew 16:23

⁴⁴ Ephesians 5:31-32 For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh. This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church.

transformation not an external one. It is not behavioral alone. It is not ceremonial or an outward conformity but as God put it to the prophet Ezekiel, “a new heart and ... a new spirit⁴⁵ ...” The stone heart, then, that God diagnosed ... was it not the hard heart Jesus spoke of that resulted in bills of divorce? The meaning of all these passage are best understood by the henotic relationship. God would give His people “a heart of *flesh*” in place of the hardness that could not know “oneness.”

*Jesus replied, “Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard. But it was **not this way from the beginning.**”⁴⁶*

This is not a spiritual heart or a healed heart, but said to be one of *flesh*. Is this not the same as “one flesh” in union with God? Is this not another way of hinting at a return to the original plan in Eden. It is a return to the humanity God purposed that would be able to enjoy a growing closeness with Him.

Divorce was not original with God. It was not planned as part of the Eden experience. There is a contrast here between a one flesh relationship and man’s tendency toward divorce. The implication is undeniable: The henotic relationship is a life-long marriage commitment as Christ’s bride in relation to Him is eternal.⁴⁷

We have been saying that three things are required for a “one flesh” union (Christ and His church or a man and a woman) to ultimately result: (1) an enduring or long-term relationship, (2) 2 mature individuals, (mature people are child-like but not childish) since long term development is a maturing

⁴⁵ Ezekiel 36:26

⁴⁶ Matthew 19:8

⁴⁷ In this light, I Corinthians 11:7 might be less an offense in today’s culture. A man ... is the image and glory of God; but woman is the glory of man. Oneness is a sharing of God’s Glory; it is not a distinction between man and woman as ministers of Christ and worshippers of God. Both the man’s and the woman’s transformation ultimately is to Christ.

of both partners in relationship, and (3) characterized in both partners by mental health. We need to deal with the emotional baggage of past abuses whether or not we gave or received the hurt.

Healthy Christians

I must admit here, a brief study of Abram Maslow's *"Toward A Psychology of Being"* was of interest to me. Maslow does not single out believers. In fact, he treats all interviews he had as merely individual examples of a general humanity from which he wanted to identify what could be called "healthy."⁴⁸ His work included thoughts on healthy marriage relations (Adam and Eve before the 'Fall'?) which caught my attention. If Maslow's work has any merit for a believer, it would be a believer's "new" nature in relation to Christ. There appears to be many scriptures to support this study. The scripture is probably the most reliable resource on psychological insight for believers—No! It should be the primary, perhaps, the only source—but we have spent our lives arguing the theological value of denominational distinctives. As fun as that has been, a study in a "oneness with Christ" for a believer suggests a healthy christianity ...and a maturing closeness with the Savior we follow.

Perhaps, we would find it more reasonable than coincidental that healthy, mature believers have much in common with Christ and a "healthy" christianity. A good

⁴⁸ "There is now emerging over the horizon a new conception of human sickness and of human health, a psychology I find so thrilling and so full of wonderful possibilities that I yield to the temptation to present it publicly even before it is checked and confirmed, and before it can be called reliable scientific knowledge." - Maslow, Abraham H.. *Toward a Psychology of Being* (p. 14).

indication of psychological health, first, (Maslow thought, and so do I) includes:

- a *comfortable acceptance of life*. Does this not answer to the Christian concept of *faith* and *trust* in God?⁴⁹ *“The just shall live by faith.”*⁵⁰
- There is also a marked acceptance, of life, *“I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances.”*⁵¹ and of themselves,⁵² and of personal responsibility⁵³ as well as
- An acceptance of others.⁵⁴ Emotionally well persons have an appreciation of others, also. I recall, in this regard, the Pauline instruction to the church: *“those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable,”*⁵⁵
- Healthy christians, also, have a remarkable degree of spontaneity in joyful fellowship among other believers even—especially—those who are culturally distinct from them.⁵⁶ (Think of what heaven’s going to be like in terms of our universal fellowship with one another.) Their response is Christlike without regard to the differences that tend to otherwise divide the world. If this be true, church-goers who are selective or separatist

⁴⁹ Habakkuk 3:17-19 [KJV] Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither [shall] fruit [be] in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and [there shall be] no herd in the stalls: 18 Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation. 19 The LORD God [is] my strength, and he will make my feet like hinds' [feet], and he will make me to walk upon mine high places.

⁵⁰ Habakkuk 2:4 KJV

⁵¹ Philippians 4:11

⁵² Leviticus 19:18 Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against anyone among your people, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the LORD

⁵³ Galatians 6:4-5 Each one should test their own actions. Then they can take pride in themselves alone, without comparing themselves to someone else, for each one should carry their own load.

⁵⁴ Romans 15:7 Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God.

⁵⁵ 1 Corinthians 12:22

⁵⁶ 1 Thessalonians 5:11 Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.

are less than “well” or “mature,” who defensively guard themselves by keeping an emotional distance from believers of another “stripe.” If I dare say it: racism, for that matter, is a meaningless term among healthy believers. Color, gender, social status, personality, opportunity for ministry, among other social or cultural differences are met with disinterest among the psychologically healthy believers whose focus is on fellowship and worship.⁵⁷ The exciting thing is the miracle of Christ’s work in each heart and life. He has proven to be “no respecter of persons.”⁵⁸

- At the same time, healthy Christians have an increased desire for privacy. They cherish an active prayer life, what David called “*The secret counsel of the LORD...*”⁵⁹

A few extra characteristics that immediately come to pen are:

- They learn to be “*content whatever the circumstance.*” They live (by faith) independent of their environment.⁶⁰
- They enjoy an abundance of life.⁶¹ Jesus made this a primary goal of His incarnation.

⁵⁷ Colossians 3:11 Here there is no Gentile or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all.

Galatians 3:28 There is ...neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

⁵⁸ Acts 10:34 Then Peter began to speak: “I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism.

⁵⁹ Psalm 25:14 [CSB] The secret counsel of the LORD is for those who fear him, and he reveals his covenant to them.

⁶⁰ Philippians 4:11 I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances.

⁶¹ John 10:10 I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.

- An increased empathy and ability to relate to another's good, as well as "mis" fortune.⁶² Healthy believers display a marked spirituality that expresses itself in joining with another in their excitement or their need. They are caring persons.
- A strong ethical and moral standard.⁶³ Their love does not find evil a satisfying revenge but always something to be addressed with a view toward love and reconciliation.
- Their view of persons in need holds that people are not problems, people have problems.⁶⁴ Christian love cannot be made to lose hope or faith. Love also protects others from further hurt when possible.

A review of these characteristics in Scripture shows that Jesus' life was a constant lesson on swimming when the water gets deep, of living above the conflicts in the realm of faith.⁶⁵ It is appropriate to walk a space with the Savior and allow ourselves to draw closer to a "oneness" in Christ that gives meaning to our verse: Genesis 2:24.

⁶² Romans 12:15 Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn.

⁶³ 1 Corinthians 13:6 Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth.

⁶⁴ 1 Corinthians 13:7 It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

⁶⁵ Abram Maslow referred to many of these traits as a "self-actualization" "Self-actualizing people, those who have come to a high level of maturation, health, and self-fulfillment, have so much to teach us that sometimes they seem almost like a different breed of human beings. But, because it is so new, the exploration of the highest reaches of human nature and of its ultimate possibilities and aspirations is a difficult and tortuous task." — Maslow, Abraham H.. *Toward a Psychology of Being* (p. 66). Wilder Publications, Inc.. Kindle Edition.

Christ, The Perfect Man

I wonder how Jesus' interview would go if He were asked questions designed to ascertain His mental well-being. We must set aside the fact that He was sinless. Psychology does not even define the concept. Living in total harmony with God is something beyond the scope of any psychological inquiry. Often life is interpreted in terms of a person's emotional and psychological weaknesses, their ability to cope with adversity, and the like, but Jesus didn't cope; He prayed. He walked on water instead of fearing the waves.

But we could investigate His relationships. We would enjoy asking Him about His feelings and His thoughts following a dinner with Zacchaeus, a tax collector held in ill repute. Would He comment on His gentle consideration of women like Mary Magdalene,⁶⁶ rescued from a life of despair and now fawning over His every word while they crisscrossed the country together. We might be interested in Jesus' discussion with the Samaritan woman at the Well of Jacob to whom He offered living water—every believer knows the story. (Jews had no dealings with Samaritans but this is Jesus!)

We could discuss His need for privacy: *"One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God."*⁶⁷

We might ask Him about those moments during His earthly sojourn when He seem to display a rich emotional reaction to life. We might remind Him of what Luke alleged:⁶⁸

⁶⁶ Mark 16:9 Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had driven seven demons.

⁶⁷ Luke 6:12

⁶⁸ Luke 10:17-21

*The seventy-two returned with joy and said, "Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name." He replied, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you. However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven." At that time **Jesus, full of joy** through the Holy Spirit, said, "I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. Yes, Father, for this is what you were pleased to do.*

Jesus didn't have to reach for a healthy view of life. He was there already, because somehow sin that corrupts the innocence of childhood and the childlike ability to love and forgive⁶⁹ (which are oddly true also of the most mature and psychologically well),⁷⁰ sin, was not in His character or His heart.

And what about His ability to make lasting friendships, which is a healthy and mature thing to do. Jesus' friendships proved eternal. Friendship with Jesus is definable as sharing the message of the kingdom, private moments on some hillside or on the other side of a lake, along with a deepened and exciting sense being part of whatever Jesus was about to do. Jesus clarified this too to His disciples:

I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.⁷¹

⁶⁹ Luke 22:34 Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." Some early manuscripts do have record this statement but could we deny He meant it! Calvary was the supreme act of God's forgiveness.

⁷⁰ Maslow points out the B-love (love for loves sake) is "simultaneously mature and childlike." - Maslow, Abraham H.. *Toward a Psychology of Being* (p. 98). Wilder Publications, Inc.. Kindle Edition.

⁷¹ John 15:15

The Henotic Relationship: A Biblical Study in Oneness 31

There was one other characteristic of the healthy and mature⁷² that finds some validation in the Savior's life: He has always been creative.⁷³ Jesus' creative involvement in our lives should be legendary: resolving conflicts, performing miracles, many unseen, protecting us from ourselves, ...to name a few.

Creativity here is more a childlike adventure into crayons or blocks, the ability to be creative when required by circumstances, to utilize present resources to facilitate a miracle. Jesus could foresee danger and prepare a way out for Himself and His followers, until He intentionally set His face to go to Calvary.

Creative moments in the Savior's life are everywhere visible: when He looked up and saw Zacchaeus clinging to the branch of a sycamore tree, when the women at the well ran into Him resting there, at the marriage of Cana when He made wine! And everything had a purpose. Everything He did, as the few disciples who followed Him affirmed at that marriage: He *"manifested forth his glory; and his disciples believed on him."*⁷⁴

Paul longed to more fully and completely know Him.⁷⁵ In relational terms, Paul wanted to experience this oneness introduced to Adam and Eve but now being realized in the marriage of Christ and His church. Somewhere in the record of Jesus' incarnation are revealed those healthy reactions to life's

⁷² Recall Maslow used the term "self-actualized" They had a healthy perception of who they were in relation to their world.

⁷³ "...more improvised, extemporized, impromptu, more created out of nothing, more unexpected, novel, fresh, not-stale, non-canting, untutored, unhabitual. It is also less prepared, planned, designed, premeditated, rehearsed, aforethought, to the extent that these words imply prior time and planning of any sort. It is therefore relatively unsought, non-desired, unneeded, purposeless, unstriven for, "unmotivated,"or undriven, since it is emergent and newly created and doesn't come out of prior time. - Maslow, Abraham H.. *Toward a Psychology of Being* (p. 95). Wilder Publications, Inc.. Kindle Edition.

⁷⁴ John 2:11

⁷⁵ Philippians 3:10 I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death,

blessings and hostilities the Savior taught us as His disciples and friends. In following the Savior we share in His mission, we grow more united with Him. We seek to become one with Christ as He prayed.

that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. - John 17:21

But is there more to the Story of Adam and Eve? It was their relationship before sin when this Biblical theme was introduced to us.

I occasionally ask a stupid philosophical question (rhetorically just for entertainment): why did God who has always been from eternity past wait so long to create Adam and Eve? Their brief period of oneness together (there is no indication how long they enjoyed Eden) gave them an insightful glimpse into “Oneness” we now desire to understand.

Yet the Bible did record the wedding.

The First Wedding

Genesis 2:24 in the Septuagint begins “*For this cause*” will a man leave his parents ... For what cause?

*The man [Adam] said [to God? Or in soliloquy?], “This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called ‘woman,’⁷⁶ for she was taken out of man.”⁷⁷ **That is why** a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh.⁷⁸*

Some scholars maintain that the explanation of “a man and woman being united to become one flesh” was Moses’ explanation. It was not something Adam said; but, no doubt, Adam would agree.

This “cause” becomes the subject of hours of casual banter among friends who mercilessly harry a friend about to “tie the knot .” This is all done in fun but why a man is drawn to a woman is also the topic of deep philosophical discussion and psychological enquiry. The scripture ‘blames’ this abandonment to sense, this pulling of the heart, on God’s refashioning a woman from a “rib.”

The reason a man finds to leave home and wed is to be united with her who was that part of him taken but now gifted back by God as “a help suitable for him.”

Harrison explains:

אִשָּׁה ⁷⁶

אִישׁ ⁷⁷

⁷⁸ Genesis 2:23

The dramatic form of the narrative thus conceals the spiritual equation "Man= male + female," teaching that the personality of an individual the species homo sapiens can only be most fully expressed when it is complemented in proper and compatible marital unity by that of another individual of the opposite sex.⁷⁹

Harrison's statement speaks generally of mankind. Harrison, here, jumps to the conclusion of the matter that marriage is one man and one woman. This is why some discussion of LGBTQ in light of this test (Genesis 2:23-24) should be considered.

Here was an exclamatory outburst by Adam, no doubt, awestruck by Eve's beauty. How can we know she was beautiful and why should this be important in understanding the text? Adam, we must assume, was attracted to Eve and inevitably in love with her. To assume otherwise is to assume that the attraction that draws us to an altar would not have been Adam's experience. But we should be allowed to assume that he was as human as we. Consider the following reasons in support of her beauty.

- That God offered Adam someone to whom he would not or could not be attracted is never assumed. To think so would suggest that Adam's immediate approval to bring him to love her was not a natural reaction before the "Fall." Adam, in that case, would have been created capable of a long term relationship-sight unseen-that had nothing to do with attraction. But the scripture records God made her "suitable" for him. This would also imply that man's attraction to a woman's beauty was indeed one of the simple pleasures of Eden (which is what the name Eden⁸⁰ means: *pleasure*).

⁷⁹ Harrison. p. 555

175 ⁸⁰

- The Scripture describes God as a giver of perfect gifts.⁸¹ It remains to understand in what ways Eve was the “perfect” gift for Adam but it seems reasonable to imagine her beauty at least an initial aspect of it.
- The biggest reason for imagining Eve a most beautiful woman, we learn from the Greeks: The ideas of good and beauty⁸² are interchangeable in Greek thought—even in the Bible.⁸³ The attraction of a man to a woman is initially her beauty then love.

In that first moment, with her standing before him like the gift of God that she was,⁸⁴ Adam was lost for words. He could only stutter out what God had done to bring her to him. She was literally bone of his bone; she was his rib. Adam also called her flesh of his flesh. Eve remains in Adam’s mind and heart a vital part of himself. Perhaps, this was his way of saying, as Paul, “*husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies*”⁸⁵

But most revealing of his thoughts is the name he gave her. He named her, *Eve*. Her name in Hebrew is the feminine form for “man.” She was his other part.

Eve was not given that name to designate her as a female or as a woman or even necessarily as a man’s physical partner to propagate the species. These are all surface interpretations, hormonal explanations of a raw animalism that does not take into account the dynamic of the moment—God just created for Adam his *wife*, his *bride*. And he would be her husband!

⁸¹ James 1:17 Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.

⁸² “beautiful” is “applied by the Greeks to everything so distinguished, in form, excellence, goodness.” Much oftener used to translate the Hebrew word ‘good.’ —Thayers p. 322.

⁸³ Genesis 3:6 the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye,

⁸⁴ God brought her to Adam. וַיְבִיאָהּ אֱלֹהֵי אָדָם

⁸⁵ Ephesians 5:28

Because of the hardness of men's hearts, this insight, I maintain, was lost. Women knew their husbands not as 'husbands' but as masters.⁸⁶ Again, this was not what God intended in introducing Eve to Adam. This is clear in God's promise of a coming time when Israel's relationship with Him would, by analogy but also in a more significant sense, return to the man-woman relationship God offered to Adam.

"In that day," declares the LORD, "you will call me 'my husband'; you will no longer call me 'my master.' — Hosea 2:16

There was romance in the air. This brief narrative offers us the genesis of love.

If this be so, there is the inescapable suggestion that God saw only a single couple which began life as a vital part of each other. This "love" relationship carries into the New Covenant relationship between a married couple, and also, Christ and the Church.

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her - Ephesians 5:25

Another clear indication that all this is so is the inspired use of the term "suitable." God made Eve *suitable* for Adam, but the word "suitable" is not the best English translation. If this were German, I would say God made her his *Lebenslangerschicksalsschatz*, his "lifelong treasure of destiny." In Hebrew the word is three words "corresponding to him" or "nearest like him." That this does not refer to common physical features like 2 eyes and walking on 2 feet is clear from the other word in the phrase "help." No animal God created was near enough a "help" to him as Eve.⁸⁷

⁸⁶ BAAL

⁸⁷ Of Uzziah, we read And his name spread far abroad; for he was marvellously helped, till he was strong. - 2 Chronicles 26:15

The LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable⁸⁸ for him." Genesis 2:18

Unlike the rest of creation, Eve was Adam's *match*.

Genesis 2:24 begins "*That is why a man leaves his father and mother...*"

"This is why" is another way to say "therefore" and every "therefore" explains a "wherefore" that precedes it in the narrative. So Adam was saying, I cleaved to her because she was taken from me and now gifted back as this enchanting beauty who has been empowered by God to meet needs I am only beginning to discover within me. She is perfect for me; that's why I have joined to her to become one ...again.

I simpler answer, why he left parents to join to Eve? ... in a word, *Love*.

Love

Tina Turner in 2009 sang: "*What's love got to do, got to do with it/What's love, but a second-hand emotion...*" She was not speaking of Genesis 2:24.

God "primed the pump" of love of our first parents. God is love and His gift of Eve had to be infused with that same spirit. But, sadly, they would have to draw from that well outside Eden.

Did Adam love Eve? I want to believe so, even though, their argument over the temptation that separated them from God, little doubt, came between the two of them as well. They

⁸⁸ corresponding to him, used of things which are like one another:
יְהוָה

sacrificed an experience in “oneness” for the knowledge of evil which makes no sense, but then again, neither do we when we find temptation more of a draw than the “good” God has already given us.

The origin of love has been a favorite topic of deep thinkers for millenia. In Plato’s Symposium,⁸⁹ a discussion on the origin of love and beauty, Socrates suggests that learning to love is a step toward discovering higher beauty and truth... The origin of love, Aristophanes explained using a myth to involve the gods. In the myth some humans were Hermaphrodites. Zeus, fearing their power, cut them in half separating mankind into 2 genders. The story goes that man and woman ever since roamed about seeking their other half to be whole again. *“That is love. ... Aristophanes concludes,”*⁹⁰

The real truth here is that now outside Eden’s gate, where stands an angel with a flaming sword, love is the only thing Adam and Eve brought with them. The rest of Eden remains off-limits. God still keeps in reserve the possibility for a “one flesh” union between a man and a woman. But now, this experience is challenged by a metastasized, creeping, evil that can kill it. This is probably why Tina Turner could sing out that love is nothing more than an emotion that is not all that important. She’s wrong, to be sure, but now, it is hard to prove what hard hearts cannot sense or experience.

Love is a catalyst which can take two individuals and unite them into one. In doing so, love remains strong. It is not spent or destroyed in the process, which is how catalysts work. The analogy I like is using platinum, the catalyst, to unite hydrogen and oxygen to make water releasing electrical energy to power engines. In cars they are called catalytic converters. The downside, they say, is that platinum is expensive ...and so is love.

So, oneness takes a man and a woman, both emotionally and psychological healthy, both willing to spend a lifetime

⁸⁹ a philosophical text by Plato dated c. 385–370 BC

⁹⁰ <https://allthatsinteresting.com/plato-symposium>

developing, maturing, and cultivating love in their relationship. It's probable that very few couples have any idea what we are saying here.

It would be this couple that could read Paul and say that it makes sense:

The wife does not have authority over her own body but yields it to her husband. In the same way, the husband does not have authority over his own body but yields it to his wife. — 1 Corinthians 7:4

Each one knows that the secret of their fulfillment, even in a career sense, is found in this relationship to each other. This explains Paul's advice to the church at Corinth that women should wear veils but not their husbands. This cultural expression takes on a symbolic meaning in Corinth that Paul uses to bring order to their service and fellowship.

But I want you to realize that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God. A man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God; but woman is the glory of man. - 1 Corinthians 11:3-4

Couples who are experiencing any degree of "oneness" can attest to this cultural symbolism. A corinthian woman wore the veil to show that she was God's help "suitable" for her husband. It is a badge of honor not a degrading of her gender. The man is her husband not her master as we have tried to make clear. Godet, a French theologian, wrote, "*it is in Him [Christ] that she loves him [her husband].*"⁹¹ Godet then defines "One Flesh" as "*an indissoluble organic unity.*"⁹² Godet quoting an M. Sabatier adds, "*the one does not reach the fulness of existence without the other.*"⁹³

⁹¹ Godet, p. 110

⁹² *ibid.* p. 112

⁹³ *ibid.*

Gotfried Quell in the Theological Dictionary calls love a “spontaneous feeling which impels to self-giving.”⁹⁴ This is true in all relationships, not just spousal.⁹⁵

But wives, Paul exhorts, should “... submit ... to [their] husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.”⁹⁶ This idea of submission is not a blank check for husbands to pretend they are masters (We need to point out the difference between these two ideas). Submission is a wife’s ministry, her calling, as regards her husband. His is defined in more general terms of love: “Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them.”⁹⁷ Do not pretend to be masters. Be husbands!

⁹⁴ Kittell, Vol I. p. 22.

⁹⁵ Leviticus 19:18 “...love your neighbor as yourself. I am the LORD.”

⁹⁶ Colossians 3:18.

⁹⁷ Colossians 3:19

A Man's Need

According to God, the man needed help, not the woman. This is a humbling appraisal of a man's condition. His wife supplies something vital to his ability to succeed. His rib was not a vestigial part of him that could be tossed away but a part of him God in wisdom remolded into what could be now gifted back to him as a grace befitting to his need for help.

This truth is more apparent when it isn't part of a marriage. There is no greater enemy of a man's abilities and dreams than a wife who opposes him. She is the one person empowered by divine design in the marriage contract to see him succeed if she supports his interests or ultimately struggle and fail if she does not. Wives may not realize that a man's reluctance to show warm emotions might be a symptom of his need for emotional support. She is his heart's voice if she is with him.

In today's world of equality, many women complain that their interests are not of equal worth but should be. True enough, but she does not require this same support as a man. A husband does not need to support his wife! That's not it. God deemed her someone capable of shoring up his weaknesses, supplying the emotional strength he lacks, adding a woman's touch through her love that revives him in the mist of debilitating discouragement.

Her career could be taking her in another direction than her husband's, separating them emotionally, straining the marriage bond, challenging any desire for "oneness." This is no one's fault. But it is a conundrum. They need to find a way to support each other's interests in order that she might remain in the spiritual role God envisioned for her.

A wife's calling is to be a "match" for her husband, the piece to the puzzle that best fits his piece to provide a beautiful picture of this divine provision. This "Eden original" transcends all cultures since it preceded them. It comes down to a couple needing to decide: Eden's or another interpretation of what marriage provides and means.

When we, husband or wife, carry into the marriage unresolved issues from earlier years, when we are not mature enough, healthy enough, yes, and spiritual enough, to see what God envisioned in Eden for Adam and Eve, we might find this whole biblical view of marriage too difficult for us. We might even push back and use our cultural interpretation of marriage as an argument against it. This we can do! But we sacrifice the "oneness," the "one flesh" unity God promised. Our choice!

Intimacy

Oneness has a metric, a way of learning how comfortable in marriage a couple could be. Perhaps, my enthusiasm in making such a *prima facie*—and in part, anecdotal, argument is pre-mature but for me the sum of years of thought, and study, and primarily with one wife who now shares with me the private memories and experiences of a lifetime together speaks of a level of intimacy that can tell us how close we really are.

The metric or measuring rod is intimacy. How intimate have two persons been in the marriage bond? It might be better to ask the opposite by flipping this question over: Does a man or woman have a secret that they are keeping from their spouse? Are there things they will not discuss with their spouse or even reveal to them because they think such thoughts, or what they did, or where they went, could result in painful confrontation or worse?

We are not talking about privacy in which spouses enjoy thoughts and time away from each other but with each other's blessing or approval (A good thing). We are talking about things that happen behind closed doors (by metaphor) but not with each other, not a shared secret (which supports oneness) but a part of one spouse's life that remains hidden from view although it might be revealing itself in some other form (anger, blame, emotional distance, etc.).

Let's talk Bible. Christ shares secrets with His church the rest of the world knows nothing about.

*The one who is victorious I will make a pillar in the temple of my God. Never again will they leave it. I will write on them the name of my God and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which is coming down out of heaven from my God; and I will also write on them **my new name.***⁹⁸

Members of Christ's body have insight into truth, not because that know secrets, but because they know Him in secret who is the revealer of secrets. Paul said it best, "...*your life is now hidden with Christ in God.*"⁹⁹

Sharing of one's self, sharing hopes, desires, fears, dreams, needs, wants, and all things that share in the discovery of who we are and who we are becoming—all—with a spouse ignites romantic love and love is the catalyst to bring about another step closer to complete oneness. Young couples begin this journey in which they reveal to each other and share of themselves with each other in confidence "behind closed doors." As the years role on and they walk together through the hard times as well as the easy times, they continue to share, to communicate their love, to express their doubts as well as their faith, their pride and shame, their joys and hurts. They are discovering the deeper secrets of each the other, who they are in love with. Oneness happens, the two become one flesh. It is like taking 2 distinct shades of color blending them together to make one unique shade of experience, of life, of a love relationship.

This is the secret value of intimacy with no one else but a spouse.

⁹⁸ Revelation 3:12

⁹⁹ Colossians 3:3

One Flesh

This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman,' for she was taken out of man." That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh.

It is unreasonable to think that any part of this formula for ultimate marital unity is coincidental or added for poetic effect. Instead it introduces to us God's original idea for marriage: united, one man and one woman, for life—for it takes a lifetime together to begin to realize in the marital experience the biblical idea of "one flesh."

It might be suggested that everything we have said could also describe an enduring friendship but here, symbolized, while a couple is able, by the coital embrace, there is a depth to the intimacy and friendship that surpasses other relationships. Friends, also usually do not "live together." My friend is not my 'rib' back within my life, within my heart, within my day, and within my thoughts. My *wife* is.

Marriage The Modern Way

Modern definitions of the extended family and of relationships in general have blurred this truth out of cultural existence. Many arguments are sought in support of social change and of cultural memes that make Genesis 2:24 sound mythological. After all ... a *rib!*? The symbolism is lost to literal interpretation that from a scientific perspective seems laughable. Beside, modern psychology is in no position academically to give credence to a biblical concept that they have discarded as nonsense.

What about single people? Are they “incomplete”?

What about a person married to the wrong person, who lives in cold emotional isolation and silence or who only finds release in divorce? How did this idea benefit them? How does this idea help them pick up the broken pieces and put Humpty Dumpty back together again!

What about second or third marriages? And what about the countless numbers of traumatized and abused individuals who may never reach any semblance of this “one flesh” relationship?

What about the countless who through causal relationships go from partner to partner seeking some kind of happiness or sense of belonging? Are their chances gone for experiencing the unity of this verse?

It seems, since we are talking “for life” that we get one shot at this ..and many miss. Does God offer any of them any consolation prize, any chance at realizing the message of Genesis 2:24? Or is this verse for the chosen few who can now “lord it

over” the rest of society with some message of spiritual superiority!?

What we are asking is: if God made us with a missing piece, with a vacancy in our lives that only one other person of the opposite gender can fill, doesn't that sound cruel? And doesn't it seem unreasonable for those who are happy single or for those who are, so tired, trying to crawl their way back to a state of happiness after life has kicked them in the mud, to now assume that the love they so crave has to be a marriage bond—*for life!* Doesn't God care about these people!

And what about widows and widowers whose opportunity is past. One man I knew said he lost half himself when his wife died. He lived the rest of his days with the sweet memory of a love he awaited anew in glory. For this life, he endured the sorrow. Another man informed us—almost apologetically—that he wouldn't be joining our little group come Christmas. He wanted to be with his wife. She had died years earlier and that Christmas he was indeed reunited.

It seems almost contradictory to hear Paul say

*...Are you free from such a commitment? Do not look for a wife.*¹⁰⁰

No one is denied happiness because they are single. Paul suggests that a person's preference should be being single unless one's desire for a spouse is overwhelming.¹⁰¹ God would never limit anyone's potential for happiness and love based on marital status but, for anyone who is married, Genesis 2:24 is something to seriously consider.

There is much to challenge “oneness” within a marriage and some couples might conclude that although they want such unity it is unobtainable. Never give up on such a pursuit! Seek counsel, seek God, and see where your quest takes you.

¹⁰⁰ 1 Corinthians 7:27

¹⁰¹ 1 Corinthians 7:9 But if they cannot control themselves, they should marry, for it is better to marry than to burn with passion.

Other Relations

And what about same sex marriage. Can't this fall into the truth of Genesis 2:24? Can 2 women or 2 men in matrimony find a "one flesh" unity the same as a heterosexual couple?

The analogy of the 'rib' in the Biblical story points to a definite personality *difference* between Adam and Eve, one man and one woman. How would it be possible to establish this distinction in a homosexual relation? Who is "the rib" and who needs that rib as a "helper." In terms of the Biblical account, then, homosexuality is not an easy interpretative fit.

But is it still possible for a homosexual couple to have a level of intimacy that would compare to the unity in a heterosexual couple? Using the analogy of two pieces to a puzzle, how do two pieces that are the *same* "fit" together. Puzzle pieces require a connection point in which one fits into the other. This is not just a question of complimentary lifestyles or feelings or abilities, etc. The challenge of a heterosexual relationship, unlike a homosexual relationship, is to bring together opposites, to resolve in love a natural tension between the sexes and tame those differences until they become the docile compliments of one life.

We can maintain with a reasonable degree of certainty, then, that psychologically, as well as physically, men and women are difference "pieces." It is this difference that provides the dynamic connection to make two "one flesh."

Homosexual relationships are not built on differences that need love to resolve into oneness. Homosexuality is built on a general commonality of feeling and thought that encourages a sensitivity in the relationship that, in effect, short circuits such need. Utilizing intimacy and love to discover each other's psychological strengths and needs, as well as, to adjust to sexual

tensions and differences is not the primary endeavor in a same sex relationship as it must be in a heterosexual one.

Homosexuality is not the pathway to “one flesh” between two persons whose psychological makeup, thoughts and feelings need to be compromised, discovered, and adjusted to become one. A husband must learn to listen and that challenge is like the chick breaking out of the egg. For the husband this is a necessary activity to become strong in the relationship. It is a stronger love that supports “oneness.”

And what about polyamorous relationships? Is it possible to become one with 2 separate partners? If this would work it must involve more than the single link between one man and one woman. One man and 2 women adds up to 3 relationships; one man and 3 women would be 6 relationships.¹⁰² This is a complexity, as regards, “one flesh” that has never been explored in serious counseling. Couples involved in multiple partnerships seek an honesty and openness on multiple levels in order to work through psychological and emotional issues. Beyond that, it would have made some sense if God wanted to utilize this relational approach to have created 2 or 3 Eves, but He didn’t.

“Oneness” on a more complex relational level, I suggest, is unachievable especially if each partner is part of another set of open relationships not shared by all. And what about a complexity built on both homosexual and heterosexual relationships? Clearly we have escaped the boundaries of the Biblical Eden narrative! Polyamory becomes a social group whose concern is to maintain the social/sexual network and not an interest in “one flesh.”

¹⁰² This is a triangular pattern: <https://www.mathsisfun.com/algebra/triangular-numbers.html> $1 + 2 = 3$; $1 + 2 + 3 = 6$; $6 + 4 = 10$; $10 + 5 = 15$ relationships. This was not God’s intent.

Conclusion

Intimacy that melds 2 persons into a loving unity is only possible within the parameters of the Eden relationship.

Do these other relational units provide some emotional or psychological support for their participants? Of course, they do, else they would not be attractive as a social meme.

Is the Bible telling us that persons whose relationships are maintained outside the Biblical patterns (one man, one woman, or single) are in danger of God's angry response? I would caution would-be biblical scholars from assuming things not in evidence either in scripture or, more specifically, in Genesis 2:24. God allowed divorce and it was clear in the biblical narrative that He allowed a man to be wed to more than one woman without disowning that man as His beloved creation. He allowed for hard hearts to live with less than His ideal but the age of grace was to arrive when the Genesis 2:24 experience would once again be available to those who would seek it.

But the overarching truth here is the oneness promised between Christ and us, His church. All believers, marriage relationships notwithstanding, are invited to join with Christ.

Few, if any of us, even within the church, I guess, enjoy a marriage that experiences the closeness, the intimacy, and the sense of belongingness that we envision a sinless Adam and Eve had. We should consider using the time we have left working on this through loving communication and spending time together with our spouse.

And I regret if my conclusion offends that Genesis 2:24 only works with one man and one woman who plan a long-term

relationship. I honestly maintain this and am too old to deny it or hid my thoughts.

But what excites me most is that in God's mind, Eden is not a forgotten failure but something He intended all along to revive in His Son's relationship with us. If we are followers of Him, we are already engaged in this exciting promise and look forward to its complete realization.

Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. - I John 3:2

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