

Marriage

Learning from Couples in Scripture

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“I Take You”: Adam and Eve’s Ultimate Arranged Marriage

GENESIS 2:18-25

In every society on earth, men and women get married. But what the Christian church has established, wherever given the opportunity, is the requirement of consent. Both the bride and groom must be able to say something like “I take you.” Whether their marriage is arranged by parents or arranged by the couple themselves, they cannot be forced to make a covenant against their wills.

Covenant—that binding personal agreement to belong unconditionally—is the heart of marriage. And freedom of spirit is crucial to covenant making. In the marriage of Adam and Eve, God brought this couple together by a symphony of wills and hearts—his and theirs. The Genesis account takes us beyond culture into the paradise of God, and therefore, more than any other passage in the Bible, it tells us what God intended for this relationship. Marriage is not merely a cultural invention but is God’s perfect design for companionship.

1. How does the idea of someone else arranging your marriage strike you?

READ GENESIS 2:18-25.

2. Prior to this passage, the male is pictured as alone in creation (verses 4-17). How did God create a longing in Adam for a creature that would be his equal and his complement?

How was Adam's experience similar to or different from yours when you began to desire a lifelong companion?

3. What indications do you find in the text that while Adam was given dominion over all the lesser crea-

tures (see Genesis 1:26-30), the woman would stand in a side-by-side relationship with the man?

Remember that the style of literature used to record this event is poetic rather than the exact scientific description of an anatomy textbook. What do you think we are expected to understand from the woman's being made from Adam's rib (verses 21-22)?

4. What initiatives did God take to solve the problem of the man's loneliness?

In hindsight, what initiatives do you now see that God took in bringing you together as a couple?

*Note: the Old Testament theologian Gerhard von Rad observed that God acted like the father of the bride in bringing the woman to the man (verse 22).**

♣ 5. What help do you think we can give to young people who wish to find a suitable marriage partner within the will and initiative of God?

♣ 6. Adam and Eve had no liturgy, no temple, no Scriptures, and no planned times of prayer (except perhaps their evening walks with God [Genesis 3:8]). How would this couple worship and enjoy God without the aids we feel are so important?

Note: The phrase "at last" or "this is now" (verse 23) introduces the first poetic couplet (two lines) in the Bible. The first recorded act of worship in the Bible is the man's spontaneous relational joy in having found a suitable companion.

♣ 7. Though neither the word *marriage* nor the word *covenant* is used to describe this prototype marriage, both Jesus and Paul referred to Genesis 2:24 as God's description of covenant marriage. Why are each of the three parts mentioned—leaving, cleaving (or "being united"), and one flesh—crucial to a complete marriage?

♣ 8. How has God been involved in the creation and nurture of your marriage?

* Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1972), p. 82.