

SEX, GENDER, AND THE GOSPEL

God's Design in a
Confused World

JOE OWEN



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Sex, Gender, and the Gospel

ISBN: 978-1-9844-1573-8

Product ID: 3001225

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Text edition 2025.

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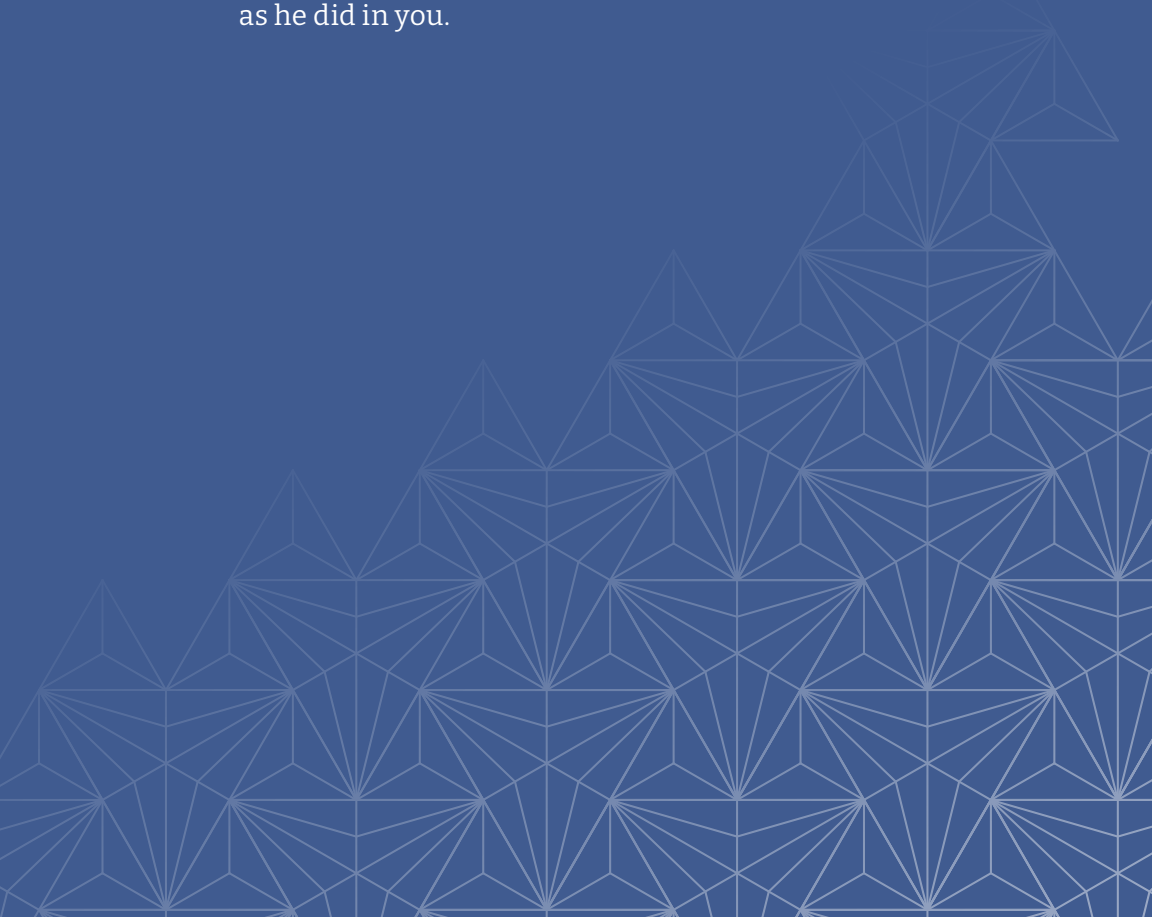
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DEDICATION

For my faithful and godly wife, Maria Elizabeth Montes de Owen, who has given and continues to give her life to her husband and family for the glory of Christ. Your life is a constant, consistent, and expository application of the theology of marriage not only for me but for our six children. Only God could have painted the beautiful portrait of the church and her prescribed relationship to the Lamb as he did in you.



FOR FROM HIM
AND THROUGH
HIM AND TO
HIM ARE ALL
THINGS. TO
HIM BE GLORY
FOREVER.

Romans 11:36

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FOREWORD

by Ken Ham

For over 40 years, I have been teaching about biblical authority, emphasizing that we must believe and defend the authority of God's Word from the first verse. How we see and submit to the authority of God's Word matters—it determines the direction of the church and, ultimately, of society. Will we submit to the authority of God's Word in all areas, or will we place ourselves as an authority over God's Word?

Our society today is aptly described in Judges 21:25: "Everyone did what was right in his own eyes." This is clearly visible in the "sexual revolution," which has morphed into the homosexual and gender revolution now sweeping the world. Society is sending a clear message to the church: "Join the revolution, or else . . ." Restrictive legislation, censorship, and intolerance against the church and biblical teaching are spreading across the globe. This ideology completely undermines the institution of marriage and the family unit. Sadly, many Christian pastors, leaders, and institutions have abdicated the clear teaching of Scripture on marriage, gender, and sexuality, surrendering to the "spirit of our age." But it didn't start there.

Many of these same pastors, leaders, and institutions first abandoned the authority of God's Word in Genesis. Instead of taking Genesis as history, they reinterpreted God's clear Word through the lens of human ideas like millions of years and evolution. But adding human ideas to Scripture undermines biblical authority. Rejecting Genesis as literal history undermines the foundation for

all Christian doctrine, which is directly or indirectly grounded in the account of Genesis 1–11. That includes the doctrine of marriage.

Who hasn't heard or read arguments like: "God is love, so anyone who rejects homosexuality does not represent my God," "God wants us to be happy no matter who we're with," "How could a good God reject people who are born gay?" or "Who are you to judge what I do in my room?" How should we respond to these arguments with the good news of the gospel and the truth of the Word of God?

We cannot base our theory, doctrines, positions, or argumentation on short sentences from social media. Nor can we decide what is true for our families and churches based on emotional arguments or dishonest threats, just to live comfortably in a lost and dark world. In Christ, we are "the light of the world" to shine in the darkness, and we need resources that dig deeper into these matters and challenge us with God's Word.

I am thrilled that Joe Owen has written this timely book to help the church take a bold, biblical stance. The first half of this book presents an apology for the foundation, design, and theology of biblical sexuality and marriage. If we are going to defend marriage and sexuality, we need to know (or be reminded of) what we are standing for! The second half of the book responds to the arguments used by those who promote LGBTQ+ and gender ideology as opposed to Scripture. It also addresses the growing "gay Christian" movement—a dangerous attempt to reconcile Scripture with homosexuality.

If we are to be the obedient church of Christ, faithful to God's Word, we must learn these truths, repent of where we have made unbiblical concessions, and take a bold and lasting stand based on biblical authority. Many today talk about being "on the right side of history," but who defines the "right side" if not God? As Christians, we do not belong to the fallen kingdom of this world but to another kingdom that is eternal, just, and holy. We are called to be on the right side of history according to God's revealed will, no matter what is popular today (and which will surely change tomorrow). Therefore, we can and must take a stand based on the authority of God's Word so that we can clearly teach his design for sexuality and marriage and shamelessly oppose the views that defy his Word. This is the only

way to resist the flood of unbiblical ideas threatening to invade our churches and homes. It is also the only way to respond with grace, truth, and the gospel to those struggling with sexual confusion. But we cannot do this unless we invest time, energy, prayer, and biblical preparation to “always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect” (1 Peter 3:15). This book is designed to point you in that direction.

It is my prayer that this book will challenge you to submit your heart and life to the truth of God’s Word and his will for your sexuality, as well as his design for marriage, in such a way that it will help you encourage your family and your church to do the same. May it also challenge you to submit to biblical authority in all areas—starting from the first verse.



Ken Ham

CEO, Answers in Genesis, the Creation Museum, and Ark Encounter

INTRODUCTION

“Without absolutes revealed from without by God himself, we are left rudderless in a sea of conflicting ideas about manners, justice and right and wrong, issuing from a multitude of self-opinionated thinkers.” — John Owen¹

Apart from teaching apologetics, I love teaching church history. My students often marvel at the heroes of the past who gave everything to live out and defend God’s eternal truths in the face of fierce blows from the world and, sadly, sometimes from the church itself. However, if we had lived at the same time as these individuals, our perspective might have been very different. Those who stood firm on the truth of God’s Word against the erring consensus were rarely celebrated as spiritual giants during their lifetime. Instead, they were more often seen as troublemakers, intolerant, and divisive. It is only from the vantage point of history that we can look back and appreciate how God used these men and women against all odds for his glory.

Today is no different. We find ourselves embroiled in a controversy for the very heart of the gospel. The current sexual revolution uses terms like *tolerance* and *love* as weapons, turning them against Christians who stand on the truth of God’s Word. Those who do not bow to the pressures of the LGBTQ+ and gender ideology movements are accused of hatred, intolerance, and discrimination.

¹ John Owen, “Quotes,” accessed July 16, 2025, <https://johnowen.org/quotes>.

These accusations bring us to some hard but necessary questions. How do we proclaim God's truth in a way that glorifies him? How do we stand firm on Scripture without falling into the pitfalls of pride or self-righteousness? How do we call sin what it is—a necessary part of the gospel's call to repentance—without weaponizing truth as a final blow of condemnation?

If we are to answer these questions faithfully, we must first step back and evaluate the foundation of what we are defending. Too often, Christians have been content to assert that the world is wrong without fully understanding the biblical truths we are upholding. This is not enough. Since the so-called sexual revolution of the previous century, much of the church's response has been focused on a defensive front rather than an assertive advance in the theology of identity, sexuality, and marriage. It is time to pause and revisit what we are defending. Then we must teach these truths theologically, promote them assertively, and defend them apologetically. This book seeks to accomplish that goal.

I begin with a confession of my own conviction: I am unashamedly committed to the inerrancy, infallibility, sufficiency, and authority of Scripture. God's Word is the ultimate authority on all matters of faith and life, including how we see God, how we see ourselves, how God relates to us, and how we are to relate to him. It is through this lens that we must approach the questions of manhood, womanhood, and marriage.

The church today faces unprecedented challenges to God's design for gender, sexuality, and marriage. Many young Christians, bombarded by cultural messaging, are asking what exactly we are defending and why. These are legitimate questions. What makes the biblical definitions of marriage, gender, and sexual intimacy worth so much sacrifice? If humans are created as sexual beings, what is the covenantal context in which this design should be lived out? If we fail to offer a biblical framework, we cannot blame our children for seeking answers in ways that grieve God.

The answer is not simply that biblical marriage supports strong families or stable societies. While these outcomes are true, they are

secondary. We uphold God's design for marriage, manhood, and womanhood because Scripture is the final authority. Gay "marriage" is wrong first and foremost because it contradicts the Creator's revealed will for humanity. Truth, by definition, is exclusive. Any competing claims that contradict God's Word are lies. There is no neutral ground upon which we can build a pragmatic defense of biblical gender, sexuality, and marriage. These truths exist for one purpose: the glory of God in Christ.

Throughout history, God has often used the church's errors to force her back to his Word, clarifying and deepening her understanding of the truth. Today is no exception. My prayer is that the church of Christ would rise to the challenge, becoming a faithful bulwark against the cultural torrents of postmodernism. I pray that we will emulate Christ, who was full of grace and truth (John 1:14). The will of God for his church is not determined by societal pressures but by the sum of his Word.

Finally, I pray that you, the reader, would consider this book's content with an open heart and mind, submitting all assumptions, traditions, and prejudices to the authority of God's Word. Our ultimate goal, as in all things, is to address the topic of gender and sexuality for the glory of God in Christ.

WHERE DO WE START?

If we could revisit Eden before the corruption of sin, we would catch a glimpse of God's perfect design for manhood, womanhood, and marriage—a design that brought joy and reflected his glory. My prayer is that by revisiting this original design, we might recapture its beauty, seriousness, and fullness as we live it out in Christ. It is only then that we will have something meaningful to teach the world and pass on to our children.

God begins his revelation in Genesis by building the foundation for all human experience and understanding of him. Within the six days of creation, we are given a privileged glimpse into the mind of God, watching as his perfect plan unfolds. If we return to Genesis 1–2,

we will see not only the historical foundation of gender, marriage, and identity but also the theological truths that define how humanity relates to the Creator. Let us return to the beginning to rediscover what God has revealed for his glory and our good.

Soli Deo Gloria



Part I

BIBLICAL FOUNDATION

AND GOD SAID,
“LET THERE BE
LIGHT,” AND THERE
WAS LIGHT. AND
GOD SAW THAT
THE LIGHT WAS
GOOD. AND GOD
SEPARATED THE
LIGHT FROM THE
DARKNESS.

Genesis 1:3-4



Chapter 1

GOD'S DESIGN FOR GENDER

To understand the theology of manhood, womanhood, and the covenant of marriage, we must move beyond viewing “good” merely as the absence of bad. Genesis 1:3–4 states, “And God said, ‘Let there be light,’ and there was light. And God saw that the light was good. And God separated the light from the darkness.” These words are striking. Why does God call the light good? Was he simply indicating that light was not evil? To conclude so would be akin to saying that God’s holiness or goodness is defined merely by the absence of sin. While it is true that God does not sin, his goodness and holiness are not dependent on evil for their definition. God has been eternally good and holy, even before the existence of evil.

Evil, in contrast, is contingent on the existence of goodness. It can only be understood as a perversion or deprivation of what is good. For example, consider the heinousness of rape. Its evil lies in its violation of a universal standard of morality, dignity, and sexuality established by our Creator. Without such an objective standard, no victim of abuse could justly complain of wrong. The very act of condemning rape presupposes a universal recognition of human dignity and moral good. Therefore, evil cannot exist apart from goodness, while goodness stands independently as a reflection of God’s nature.

When God declared light “good,” he was not comparing it to something bad. Rather, light was good because it fulfilled its divinely

intended purpose—to shine on the earth and reflect the glory of its Creator. Creation was good because it reflected God’s own goodness through its design and function. This understanding is crucial when considering our identity as human beings made in God’s image. I do not embrace my identity as a male because I feel like a man but because God’s design for males reflects his goodness. We glorify God when we accept and live according to his purposes for our lives as his image bearers.

MADE IN GOD’S IMAGE

On the sixth day of creation, God made a being distinct from the rest of creation—man, created in his image and likeness, the *imago Dei*. Some interpret this to mean that God physically resembles humans, with a head, arms, and legs. However, this view falters when we consider that animals share many similar anatomical features, yet the Bible clearly teaches that humans alone bear God’s image. Additionally, Scripture affirms that God is Spirit (John 4:24), not a physical being.

Being made in God’s image means that we uniquely reflect God’s attributes and character. Humans were created as moral and relational beings, capable of a genuine, albeit limited, relationship with God. Although we cannot comprehend God exhaustively, he has revealed himself sufficiently for us to know him truly. Humans, as ethical beings, are called to reflect God’s moral standards in our words, deeds, thoughts, and motives. While we are not called to embody all of God’s attributes, we are to reflect his moral ones.

*We uniquely
reflect God’s
attributes and
character.*

Theologians often categorize God’s attributes as communicable (those shared with humanity) and incommunicable (those unique to God). For instance, God’s holiness is communicable—we are called to be holy as he is holy. Conversely, God’s omnipresence is incommunicable; humans cannot share this quality. However, these categories are not always sharply divided. God’s omnipotence, for example, is incommunicable, as humans are not all-powerful. Yet God has entrusted us with a degree of authority and responsibility over

creation, making us stewards of his world. Thus, while humans do not mirror God's omnipotence directly, we reflect it in part by exercising dominion.

Similarly, while God is eternal and humans are not eternal in the same sense, we are created for eternity. Every person, though they have a beginning, will exist forever—either in fellowship with God or separated from him. This underscores the profound role humanity plays in bearing God's image. As his image bearers, we are called to steward our families, communities, churches, and the world, glorifying him in all we do.

INTRINSIC VALUE

As bearers of God's image, men and women possess inherent value, purpose, and responsibility simply by virtue of their creation. Our worth is not determined by what we contribute to society but by the image in which we are made. A person confined to a wheelchair is no less valuable than someone who runs marathons—both equally bear the *imago Dei*.

Both men and women are created in God's image and likeness, sharing intrinsic value and dignity.¹ Together, they represent the pinnacle of God's creation. God spoke first to man, but he also spoke to the woman, demonstrating that both are designed to have dialogue and fellowship with him. As walking, talking, worshipping image bearers of the Creator, both men and women are called to reflect God's character. Yet they do so in ways that align with their unique functions and roles.

Genesis 1 and 2 introduce the complementary roles of Adam and Eve. God's plan for his image bearers includes procreation, filling the earth, and subduing it—tasks that require distinct yet harmonious contributions from both men and women.

¹ Although Genesis 1:27 teaches that both man and woman are structurally, or in essence, made in God's image, that does not mean that they are structurally the same. 1 Corinthians 11:7 does indicate that there are structural differences between men and women, although both are made in God's image.

“IT IS NOT GOOD THAT THE MAN SHOULD BE ALONE”

When God created the world, he declared everything he had made to be “very good” (Genesis 1:31). Yet in Genesis 2, before the sixth day of creation was complete, God noted that something was not good. For the first time, a part of creation was not fulfilling its intended function. What was lacking?

God gave Adam the task of naming the animals, a process that revealed an important reality. Adam observed that the animals came in pairs—male and female—but “there was not found a helper fit for him” (Genesis 2:20). Once Adam realized this, God caused him to fall into a deep sleep and created the woman from his side. Upon waking, Adam recognized the woman as “bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh” (Genesis 2:23). This moment introduced the covenant of marriage and the context for family.

In marriage, sexual reproduction fulfills the mandate to fill the earth—not simply by producing individuals but by forming families. Genesis 2:24 states,

Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.

This union represents a covenant that reflects permanence and unity. Just as a human body is not naturally divided, so the marriage covenant is designed to remain unbroken. Eve, taken from Adam’s flesh, was reunited with him in marriage, making him whole again in a profound and symbolic sense.

In Genesis 1:27–28, God blessed the married couple and commanded them to “be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it.” This mandate applies equally to man and woman, but their roles within it are distinct. These complementary roles can be likened to mechanical gears. Structurally, gears have equal value and are crafted with precision for their unique purposes. However, gears can only function properly when they cooperate, engaging in a complementary manner to generate movement. Forcing them

into the same function leads to grinding, wear, and eventual failure. In the same way, man and woman are designed to work together in their unique roles to fulfill God's purposes.

COMPLEMENTARY ROLES

Throughout Scripture, God's design emphasizes order and structure. Just as the gospel was proclaimed first to the Jews and then to the Gentiles, so too God's creation of man and woman reflects an intentional sequence and purpose. In 1 Corinthians 11:3, Paul explains that "the head of every man is Christ, the head of a wife is her husband, and the head of Christ is God." God created Adam first, making him the head of the human race. He spoke to Adam directly, giving him his Word to relay to his family. While God also spoke to Eve (explicitly in Genesis 3), Adam was given a pastoral role, responsible for teaching his wife and later their children about God's will.

Adam's tasks further highlight his role. God assigned him the work of naming the animals, cultivating the garden, and protecting it (Genesis 2:15, 19). Adam was granted the freedom to eat from every tree in the garden, except for the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. This prohibition, given before Eve's creation, underscores Adam's role in leading and guarding his family by communicating God's command.

Eve's role, though distinct from Adam's, is equally valuable and honorable. She was created to be Adam's *ezer kenegdo*—a suitable helper (Genesis 2:18). This Hebrew phrase is rich with meaning, revealing both the dignity and the distinctiveness of the woman's role. Dr. Miguel Núñez, a pastor and seminary professor, and his wife, both of whom were physicians in the US before moving to the Dominican Republic to plant Iglesia Bautista Internacional, explain this concept clearly in their book *Revolución Sexual: Una Perspectiva Bíblica y un Análisis Médico* (*Sexual Revolution: A Biblical Perspective and a Medical Analysis*):

In Scripture, the word ezer, which appears 21 times in the Old Testament, is used in most cases to refer to God as

Helper.... It is clear, therefore, that the concept of suitable help does not imply inferiority but refers to someone who works alongside the person he helps to carry out the work entrusted to him by the Lord.²

The second part of the phrase, *kenegdo*, is translated as “suitable” or “fit.” “This is a compound word from *ke* (according) *neged* (opposite) *o* (his), which can literally be translated to ‘according to his opposite.’”³ Núñez and Scheraldi continue:

Equality between the sexes is related to their dignity and worth before God. However, they are opposites, but not as if they were enemies, but because they are different in gender, in design, in their way of seeing life and acting toward it.⁴

Eve’s role as a suitable helper reflects the way God provides support and partnership to accomplish his purposes. Her differences from Adam were not oppositional but complementary, enabling the two to work together harmoniously. This complementary design is evident even in the biological and anatomical distinctions between men and women. For example, women are uniquely equipped to nurture life, providing nourishment to their children both in the womb and during infancy. These God-ordained differences enrich the partnership between man and woman, making them better together than they could ever be alone.

² Cathy Scheraldi de Núñez and Miguel Núñez, *Revolución Sexual. Una Perspectiva Bíblica y un Análisis Médico* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2018), 46.

³ Justin Hickey, professor of biblical languages, IUCLA (Instituto Universitario Cristiano de las Américas), Monterrey, Mexico, in personal correspondence with author.

⁴ Hickey, personal correspondence.

MORE THAN MARRIAGE

A man or woman does not need to be married or have children to embrace and live out their God-given identity. Biblical manhood and womanhood do not begin with marriage, parenthood, or even taking on specific roles in the church. Instead, they begin with a submissive heart toward God's revealed will. It is a heart that responds with gratitude to God's power, wisdom, and mercy.

We were given life, bodies, and identities by God's sovereign choice. Our manhood or womanhood is not something we become through external roles or actions—it is something we are by God's design. From the moment of fertilization, God has chosen each person's sex and, along with it, the identity and roles that flow from his creative intent. A godly response begins with cherishing and being grateful for God's wise decision. Our obedience to him is then expressed as we live out this gratitude in our unique life circumstances.

*We were given
life, bodies, and
identities by
God's sovereign
choice.*

True manhood and womanhood, therefore, extend to every sphere of life, not just marriage and family. Whether single or married, with or without children, every man and woman is called to glorify God by embracing their God-ordained identity and using their gifts, talents, and opportunities to honor him. Our identity is rooted in being image bearers of God, and our roles are expressions of obedience to his design.

CONCLUSION

As image bearers of God, we uniquely reflect his nature through our ability to walk, speak, think, reason, and worship. Everything we do—our thoughts, words, motives, and actions—has the potential to proclaim something about God. When we live in alignment with his moral character, we bring him glory. However, when we deviate from his design, we misrepresent his holiness and righteousness, resulting in immeasurable tragedy.

Any immoral behavior or thought makes us blasphemers and false witnesses, distorting the reflection of God's character that we are called to display. Yet from dawn to dusk, we are given the divinely appointed opportunity to portray Christ and glorify God by living in obedience to the functional aspects of the *imago Dei*. Our identity and purpose are firmly rooted in God's design, and it is through faithful obedience to his will that we truly reflect his glory.

Chapter 2

CHRIST REVEALED THROUGH MARRIAGE

The whole Bible, not just Genesis, reveals profound mysteries. In the garden of Eden, God designed a hetero-relational covenant infused with mystery to point toward a greater, eternal covenant. The marriage union of one man and one woman, becoming one flesh, alludes to the best sermon preached in all of history: the covenantal relationship between Christ and his redeemed people. This design has always been part of God's sovereign plan.

In Genesis 2, we see the foundation of this mystery, though its fullness remained hidden for centuries until Christ's first coming. In Ephesians 5, the Apostle Paul unveils its deeper significance, quoting Genesis 2:

"Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. (Ephesians 5:31–32)

Paul's inspired words surprise us by revealing that marriage was always designed to typify the covenant of love and commitment between Christ and his church, with complementary roles in relationship. The husband reflects Christ, who sacrificially gave himself for the church, while the wife reflects the church, joyfully submitting to Christ in loving devotion. Together, their roles in marriage display

the redemptive beauty of Christ's sacrificial love and the church's faithful response. Marriage, therefore, is profoundly theological in its design and purpose.

Even in the aftermath of the fall (Genesis 3), marriage retained this divine purpose. Though sin fractured creation and marred human relationships, marriage continues to testify to the hetero-relational covenant between Christ and his church. God's design remains a witness to his glory, even amid the brokenness caused by human rebellion.

THE FALL

The fall of man in Genesis 3 paints a picture with dark colors. Satan, in his cunning, sought to steal God's glory by distorting the order of creation. The man was to serve as king and priest over creation and as head of his household, with the woman as his complementary helper. Together, in their roles, they were to exercise dominion over creation as subordinate and obedient masters. But Satan, taking the form of a serpent, subverted this order.

Rather than being ruled by Adam and Eve, the serpent gave an ungodly word to Eve, deceiving her into doubting God's provision and intentions. By focusing her attention on the one prohibited tree instead of all that God had graciously given, Satan twisted God's Word. Eve, succumbing to the serpent's lie, passed this deception to her husband. Adam, instead of fulfilling his role as a pastoral leader, failed to remind Eve of God's Word or redirect her to repentance. He could have offered her fruit from any other tree and exhorted her to seek God's forgiveness. Instead, Adam turned his back on God, obeying Eve's word instead of God's.

This tragic reversal of roles marked the intrusion of sin, rebellion, and disorder into God's once "very good" creation. The consequences of this disobedience were catastrophic, disrupting the harmony of God's design and introducing brokenness into every aspect of human life and relationships.

THE CURSE

In response to humanity's rebellion, God pronounced a curse that revealed the devastating consequences of sin. He described some immediate effects and prophesied others, showing how dysfunction would now plague the original, God-given functions of humanity. Although these roles and responsibilities remained, they would now be carried out with difficulty, serving as a constant reminder of sin's destructive power.

The woman's punishment would affect her role in childbirth and nurturing. These functions, designed to bring joy and life, would now be accompanied by great pain. Her relationship with her husband would also suffer; though she was still called to submit to his headship, her sinful heart would desire to usurp his role.

The man's responsibilities were no less burdened. Though he was still tasked with provision, the very ground from which he was formed and which he was to cultivate would resist him. Thorns and thistles would frustrate his labor, making provision a toil rather than a joy. In addition, Genesis 3:16 seems to indicate that the man's sinful heart would distort his leadership into a dictatorial or oppressive rule. This is not biblical headship but a perversion of God's original design, further straining the relationship between man and woman.

THE INTRODUCTION OF DEATH

In the garden, God had warned Adam that disobedience would bring death, and in Genesis 3, this warning came to pass. In some sense, Adam and Eve died on that very day. The most drastic and lasting implication of death is separation from God, as Isaiah 59:1–2 makes clear. Adam's sin broke his relationship with God, introducing spiritual death into humanity. According to Luke's genealogy, Adam was created as a "son of God" (Luke 3:38). But since the fall, Adam, Eve, and all of their descendants can only be *made* children of God by adoption through redemption in Christ (John 1:13).

The effects of sin were not limited to spiritual death. Physical death also entered creation, bringing decay and suffering. Adam, Eve, and their descendants would now face disease, violence, and the slow decline of their bodies through aging.

Since the fall, humans have continued to carry out the ordinances and functions given at creation—such as work, procreation, and dominion—but always through the painful struggle of sin. As Paul explains in Romans 5:12–21, Adam’s sin broke the covenant between humanity and God once and for all. Left to ourselves, this breach is irreparable. Redemption requires not just human effort or moral improvement but a new federal head—a second Adam. This new Adam would need to fulfill, through perfect obedience, what the first Adam failed to do. Furthermore, fallen humanity would somehow need to die to Adam’s race and be born again into a new creation under this new head (John 1:12–13, 3:3).

THE HOPE OF CHRIST

The fall was the greatest tragedy in history, but even amid the darkness, God provided a glimmer of hope. Rather than leaving creation in ruins, God promised that a descendant of the woman would crush the serpent and overcome the power of sin and death (Genesis 3:15). This promise is often called the protoevangelium—the first announcement of the gospel.

The seed of the woman was born in Bethlehem over 2,000 years ago. Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, both fully man (*vera homo*) and fully God (*vera Deus*), took on the role of the second—or last—Adam (1 Corinthians 15:45). Where Adam failed through disobedience, Jesus succeeded through perfect obedience. In his earthly life, he fulfilled the active obedience that Adam—and all of humanity—could not. On the cross, through what some call his “passive” obedience, Christ bore the full weight of humanity’s sin, sorrow, and shame, taking upon himself the penalty of death. His righteousness is imputed to all who trust in him, while their sin and wickedness was imputed to him on the cross.

This act of obedience and atonement is unparalleled in history. No philosophy or religion offers anything comparable. It was both the most terrible and the most beautiful act ever performed—a decisive moment in the story of eternity. God’s redeemed people are the beneficiaries of this immense grace, and marriage itself was designed to reflect this covenant of redemption.

Through Christ, marriage finds new hope. In him, redeemed hearts enable husbands and wives to fulfill their functions as image bearers of God (*imago Dei*), loving each other in sanctification and faithfulness. God continues to paint a beautiful picture of his glory as he unites man and woman in covenantal love. When a husband and wife live out their complementary roles in harmony, marriage becomes a reflection of Christ's sacrificial love and the church's joyful response, reflecting the glory of our Creator God.

GOD'S DESIGN FOR MARRIAGE

Marriage is meant to reflect Christ and his covenant with the church through the way a husband and wife view and treat one another in living out their complementary roles (Ephesians 5:17–33). If a husband and wife are not growing together in their satisfaction with the glory of Christ, they will inevitably seek fulfillment elsewhere. Yet marriage was never designed to satisfy human longing on its own. Though marriage is a gift given to us, all things ultimately exist not for us but for the glory of God (Colossians 1:16; 1 Corinthians 10:31; Romans 11:36).

In marriage, the woman was made from the man and for him, and man came through—was born of—the woman (1 Corinthians 11:9–12). Yet verse 12 reminds us, “All things are from God,” meaning that, ultimately, all things exist for his glory. While marriage offers many blessings, such as companionship and spiritual unity (Malachi 2:14–15), its foundational purpose is to display the glory of Christ and his church. Therefore, the source of unity and contentment in marriage must go beyond fleeting emotions or momentary reciprocation, resting instead in the unchanging purpose for which it was created.

True joy that satisfies the soul can only be found in Christ. When a man and a woman delight in God and find their joy at his right hand (Psalm 16:11), that joy naturally overflows into their marriage. Marriage then becomes not just a temporal union but a reflection of the eternal relationship between Christ and his church. It is not merely a means for the expression of physical desires but a covenantal relationship that glorifies God.

To understand how this mystery unfolds, consider Paul's words in Ephesians 5:22–30:

Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands. Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body.

Through their complementary roles, a husband and wife glorify God—not merely for pragmatic reasons, but because marriage reflects Christ and his church. These roles are deeply rooted in creation, where God established distinct yet harmonious functions for men and women. This design is not about competition or hierarchy of value but about joyfully displaying God's glory through mutual love and covenantal faithfulness. Just as the Father, Son, and Spirit glorify God through their distinct roles within the Trinity, so too does the complementary nature of marriage exalt the Creator.

True joy in marriage flows from finding ultimate satisfaction in Christ. When both husband and wife delight in God and submit to his original design, their union becomes a source of deep and lasting joy. This joy overflows into every aspect of their covenantal life together, including sexual intimacy. God's purpose for sexual expression within marriage goes far beyond physical satisfaction. It reflects the unity, love, and covenant faithfulness of Christ and his church. In this way, even the most intimate aspects of marriage are ultimately for the glory of Christ.

SUBMISSION

In a biblical marriage, the wife submits to her husband, and both submit to Christ. In light of past and present abuses of these roles—through chauvinism and feminism alike—the subject of authority, headship, and submission can understandably provoke discomfort. We must acknowledge the abuses on both sides of the debate without polarizing men or women or relinquishing roles in the name of “equality.” As members of God’s kingdom, we are called to obey his commands and leave the consequences to him, trusting his wisdom and goodness.

The complementary nature of submission and headship reflects the way God works in creation and redemption. Within the Trinity, the Father, Son, and Spirit fulfill distinct roles while remaining equal in essence, power, and glory. For example, in his earthly mission, the Son willingly submitted to the Father (Philippians 2:6–8), yet he remains fully God, equal in worth and nature. Although this comparison must be made with caution, it highlights an essential truth: Submission does not imply inferiority. Just as the Son’s voluntary submission in the work of redemption glorified the Father, so a wife’s submission to her husband glorifies God and fulfills his divine design.

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The Son’s mediatorial role continues today, as he intercedes for the redeemed before the Father (Hebrews 7:25). And in the end, the Son will return and deliver the kingdom to the Father (1 Corinthians 15:24–28).

Some object to biblical headship by citing Ephesians 5:21—“submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ”—as a call for mutual submission in every relationship. However, this interpretation conflicts with the specific commands that follow in Ephesians 5:22–6:9. Verse 21 serves as an introduction to these commands, which instruct submission to those whom God has placed in positions of authority. For example, children are called to obey their parents, and servants to obey their masters. If mutual submission were universal, it would imply that parents must obey their children or masters their servants—a contradiction of God’s design.

This passage does not endorse abusive relationships between masters and servants (Ephesians 6:5–9) but rather affirms the principle of submission and authority itself. Likewise, Scripture warns against the sinful misuse of authority, which can provoke or exasperate others (Ephesians 6:4). The issue at hand is not whether authority can be misused but rather the legitimacy of headship and submission within God’s design. Submission, as presented in Scripture, reflects God’s appointed order and is a matter of role and function, not of worth or value.

MARRIAGE IS FOR THE GLORY OF CHRIST, NOT JUST HUMAN HAPPINESS

Our society—and unfortunately, much of the church—has been deeply influenced by humanism. Many approach marriage as a means of achieving personal happiness, yet this perspective falls short of God’s purpose. Marriage was never designed to provide perpetual happiness, nor can it. Happiness, as most understand it, is a fleeting emotional high that cannot sustain us. Joy, however, is found in Christ and sustained by him alone (Psalm 16:11).

A biblical marriage does bring happiness and can be a source of joy. That said, no institution or created thing can be our ultimate source of joy. Scripture is full of examples of God giving us delightful things in life, and marriage is one of them. As previously stated, it offers companionship and spiritual unity between a man and a woman. However, neither the institution of marriage nor a spouse can guarantee this. How many examples in Scripture and throughout history show how sin brings heartache and loss to marriage? Yet even amid suffering, a marriage built on Christ can still experience ultimate joy.

A marriage rooted in Christ is marked not by a relentless pursuit of happiness but by the overflow of joy that comes from finding ultimate satisfaction in Jesus. When a husband and wife surrender themselves to the Lord and grow in him, their joy becomes so complete that it overflows into their marriage. This joy transforms their relationship, not by placing unrealistic expectations on one another but by grounding their hope in the only one who can truly satisfy.

People are broken cisterns, unable to hold water, but Jesus is the fountain of living water (John 4:14). When we seek in our spouse what only Jesus can provide, we will inevitably end up disillusioned and disappointed. A marriage that depends on another person for ultimate fulfillment will become a source of strife and often dissolution. But a marriage rooted in Christ experiences enduring joy because it draws from the infinite well of his love and grace.

No human relationship can satisfy the deepest longings of the heart. Only Christ can.

THE MYSTERY OF BECOMING ONE FLESH

Of all the purposes and functions of marriage, the Apostle Paul reveals its ultimate purpose:

“Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. (Ephesians 5:31–32)

Paul quotes Genesis 2:24, showing that the one-flesh union established at creation was always meant to point to Christ and the church. Following Jesus’ affirmation of the creation ordinance in Matthew 19, Paul interprets this mystery for the church. The “mystery” Paul speaks of is not the common practice of a man leaving his parents to unite with his wife—that has been understood throughout history. Instead, the “mystery” describes how two distinct persons, a man and a woman, can become one flesh in marriage, reflecting the covenantal relationship between Christ and his church.

God designed the covenant of marriage to exalt and manifest his redemptive plan. The way man and woman unite as one flesh in marriage is no accident—it was specifically created to reflect the eternal union between Christ and his bride. God the Son undertook the greatest condescension in history: Leaving his heavenly glory, he entered creation to seek and redeem his bride. The word *condescension* may carry a negative tone in human terms, but in theology, it signifies a profound and glorious truth. It speaks of the infinite, eternal, and transcendent God humbling himself, entering time and space to redeem his people.

Pastor Javier Domínguez captures this beautifully when he says:

The highest purpose of marriage is to show unbelievers the relationship of grace, love, forgiveness, and self-giving between Christ and his church.¹

This is why marriage must remain faithful to God's original design as a hetero-relational covenant. Any other combination—whether two men or two women—destroys the purpose and picture of marriage. A union between two men would reflect Christ united to Christ, excluding the church. A union between two women would reflect the church united to the church, excluding Christ. Both distortions undermine the gospel itself, which marriage was designed to proclaim.

Any unbiblical combination of two people united in “marriage” makes both parties into false teachers. Such distortions of marriage's divine purpose contradict the gospel and the very character of God's design. God designed marriage as hetero-relational and created consummation for the heterosexual marriage covenant only. No matter what we may feel or want, Scripture is clear: Marriage is for the glory of Christ. It is not ours to redefine but God's to declare. Only by his design can it truly be called marriage and bring him glory.

ENCOURAGEMENT FOR HUSBANDS AND WIVES

Husbands, love your wives as Christ loves his church. Christ gave himself for the church even when she was capricious, disloyal, double-minded, selfish, or rebellious. Husbands are to wash their wives with the Word, pastoring their homes with care and diligence. Through Adam, men were given the functions of providing, protecting, and pastoring their families. These roles, when lived out in obedience, point to God as our shepherd, provider, and protector.

¹ Pastor Javier Domínguez, quoted in a Facebook post by Regresando a la Palabra, posted November 6, 2019, <https://www.facebook.com/regresando.org/photos/a.114115849316328/373597160034861/?type=3&theater>.

No man can fully embody these roles perfectly—only Jesus fulfills them completely (Psalm 23). Yet in striving to fulfill his responsibilities, a husband mirrors God’s character to his family and the watching world. Just by treating my wife loyally—respecting her, enjoying her, and being her protector and provider—my poor life shows to all creation the sacrificial love that Christ has for his church. What an incredible privilege and honor God bestows upon husbands!

Wives, submit to your husbands as the church submits to Christ. Submission in marriage is not based on who is more gifted, intelligent, or capable but on obedience to God’s design. God has ordained specific roles for husbands and wives, not because of their abilities but because these roles reflect Christ and his church. Submit not because your husband is always right but because the church submits to Christ, who is always right.

This does not mean blind obedience to every word, but a thoughtful and godly support of your husband’s leadership. Consider Esther, who used wisdom and courage to respectfully show her husband the truth. Wives, by submitting to your husbands and helping them in complementary ways, you reflect a church that is bought, restored, and loved by Christ. What a privilege and honor God bestows upon wives!

CONCLUSION

Behold, biblical marriage. Whether we, in our individualistic and humanistic era, like it or not, this is how God designed it—for his glory. If we fail to start here, we will be ineffective in addressing the sexual depravity of our time. The culture will continue its vain trajectory toward destruction, taking countless souls with it, including our own children.

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designed it—for
his glory.*

We cannot afford to shy away from God’s design for marriage or the complementary roles of man and woman. To abandon these truths is to abandon the joy and purpose God intended for marriage. If we do not learn and teach the beauty of glorifying God through these roles, how can we blame others for rejecting his blueprints?

The struggle within the church today over these issues stems not from a lack of clarity in Scripture but from our own pride.

Do we seek our own glory, or do we seek the glory of God in Christ? When men and women find their satisfaction in Christ and cheerfully carry out their respective roles, marriage becomes a powerful demonstration of Christ and his church to a lost world.