

# *A Cord of Three Strands*



BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS OF MARRIAGE

# **A Cord of Three Strands**

**Biblical Foundations of Marriage**



**EVERY NATION**  
P R O D U C T I O N S

## **A Cord of Three Strands: Biblical Foundations of Marriage**

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Contributors: Pastor Edgar and Jeng Gorre, Pastor Chico and Mary Anne Peña, Pastor Rommel and Maan Sumaway, Pastor Andrei and Jhorace Tupas, Pastor Larry and Yet Uy

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Email: [productions@everynation.org.ph](mailto:productions@everynation.org.ph)

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## INTRODUCTION

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Marriage is one of the most important human relationships. Some see marriage as a partnership where two people agree to be together in order to enjoy the economic, social, emotional, and physical benefits the partnership brings. But as with any design, we have to go to the original blueprint in order to understand what marriage is all about. What is God's original intent for marriage, and how can we set the course for a successful marriage in an age of broken relationships?

To build a healthy marriage, we must first understand the biblical foundations of marriage.

In the beginning, when God was creating everything, this was what He said before He created man:

*... "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."* **GENESIS 1:26**

It is clear from Scriptures that God created man to reflect His image and take dominion over His creation. In Genesis 2, we see that it was not God's design for man to do this as a solo act. God initiated marriage between man and woman. He designed us to be in relationship with others as a reflection of our relationship with Him.

In this material, we will talk about God's original design for marriage. Whether you've been married just recently or for several years now, it is crucial to have a firm grasp of the Biblical foundations of marriage. It is important to understand that marriage is not just a partnership, but a union that God establishes between a man and a woman to accomplish His kingdom's purpose. Knowing these foundations can help our marriage flourish—just as God designed.

## For the Victory Group Leader

For some people in your Victory group, discussing these topics may result in a conversation beyond your time together, professional counseling, or further ministry. Here are a few tips:

- Ask the Holy Spirit for wisdom and approach each topic in a sensitive manner, trusting God to reveal to you how to best minister to those in your Victory group. Prepare ahead of time and be open to how the Holy Spirit will direct the Victory group meeting.
- Listen without assumptions or judgment. Do not be dismissive when people open up and share their stories by saying things like, all you need is faith, just pray, and other people have it worse. Tread lightly on these topics, understanding that people may have misconceptions and hurts related to each topic.
- Speak the truth in love. Ask God for discernment and wisdom, trusting Him to transform us. Remember the process of change: truth, repentance, and faith. We are all in the process of sanctification, and spiritual health is a journey. We are after progress, not perfection. While we may not have all the answers, we do not expect immediate results and are committed to journeying together in discipleship.
- Ask for help from other Victory group leaders and your pastors, as needed. Consider and respect the privacy of the people in your group, and be discerning about disclosing private information.

Together, let us effectively minister the truth of God's word with love and compassion.

# 1 In the Beginning

## WARM-UP

- Name a married couple you admire. Why?
- As a single person, what was your idea of marriage? What attracted you to your spouse?
- Since getting married, what was the most interesting discovery you have made about your spouse?

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

**GENESIS 2:24**

In Genesis 2:18–25, we find God’s original design for marriage. The text describes the first marriage and is the basis for almost everything else the Bible says about it. We will see that in the beginning, God already laid down reasons for marriage and truths about marriage, which—if applied—will enable us to build God-honoring and satisfying marriages.

Here are some foundational truths of marriage:

## 1 | Marriage is God’s idea.

*Then the LORD God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.”* **GENESIS 2:18**

God designed marriage. God made Adam and saw what Adam needed. God said, “It is not good for man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.” God made Eve, and brought and gave Eve to Adam. He presided over the first marriage ceremony. Adam did not take a wife for himself; he received a wife from the Lord. This was all God’s work. The truth is, marriage is a blessing from the Lord.

Since God designed marriage, a good marriage takes a cord of three strands to work: God, the husband, and the wife. When God is the center of marriage, it is going to work. When a husband and wife both align themselves closer to God and His ways, they also experience intimacy with each other. But, if they rely more on their own abilities rather than trusting in God, they may also begin to feel more distant from each other.

This is what happened to Adam and Eve when they disobeyed God. They experienced all the consequences that came with it, including separation from God and one another. Even Adam did not take responsibility for his disobedience and placed the weight on Eve.

On the other hand, a vibrant relationship with God where the husband and wife walk daily with Him is an essential element for a God-honoring and satisfying marriage.

Why do you think it is important to begin our discussion in the book of Genesis? How does the truth that marriage is God's idea change the way you view your own marriage?

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## 2 | Marriage is between a man and a woman.

*<sup>23</sup>Then the man said, "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man." <sup>24</sup>Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.* **GENESIS 2:23-24**

In the beginning, the original design of God for marriage is between a man and a woman, and this remains true until today. This truth has not changed and will always be the intended relationship where both can enjoy the full benefits of marriage. The union of a man and a woman in marriage is not merely a contract; it is a sacred covenant made before God.

Biblical marriage, a God-honoring and satisfying marriage, is between a man and a woman. This truth is emphasized in Genesis 2:24: *they shall become one flesh*, where *they* refers to a man and woman. How is this idea being challenged today? What do you think will happen if we understand marriage as a contract but not a covenant?

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### 3 | Marriage is for companionship.

*Then the LORD God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him."* **GENESIS 2:18**

God saw His creation and called everything He made good. But He noticed something in His creation that was not good: Adam being alone.

Even if Adam was in a perfect world, God acknowledged Adam's need for a human companion. He desires for us to have a partner who can journey through life with us. One important reason God designed marriage was to meet the human need for companionship. (However, this does not mean that God called everyone to marry [see Matthew 19:10–12], nor does it mean that marriage will fulfill all our needs.) In marriage, we have someone to dream with, to be intimate with, to go through life with (the ups and downs), and to grow old with.

God wants us to enjoy marriage, including sex within marriage. It is designed for our pleasure and to meet one of our deepest needs—human companionship. What is one thing you appreciate most about your spouse? How have you learned to express your gratitude and love?

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## 4 | Marriage creates a new family.

*Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.* **GENESIS 2:24**

After God made a woman for Adam, He said that a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife. Therefore, the union of a man and woman in marriage form a new family unit. The priority of the man and woman, because they are now married, is their new family. The husband and wife are a family, even if they do not have children. This new family does not mean that they are no longer their parents' children. They are always called to honor their parents and even care for them in old age (1 Timothy 5:4, 8), but they must prioritize and honor their spouse first.

Becoming one flesh not only refers to the establishment of one new family but also to the husband and wife's sexual union, leading to the procreation of offspring. This is in keeping with God's original command to Adam and Eve to be *fruitful and multiply and fill the earth* (Genesis 1:28). Having looked at God's original design, what are some of your thoughts and insights about marriage?

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## APPLICATION

- Go to your spouse. Recall how God brought you together as husband and wife. Appreciate your spouse and pray together.
- Is your spouse your priority, or is it your children, work, or another family member? How can you make your spouse your priority, starting today?
- Do you have a married couple who is helping you grow in your marriage? What can you do this week to build with a couple who can help you honor God through your marriage?

## PRAYER

- Thank God for your God-given spouse. Pray that together you will grow in your love for God and each other.
- Pray that your marriage will be God-honoring and a blessing to others.
- Ask God for a couple who can help you in your marriage. Pray that your marriage would be an encouragement and testimony to others.

## 2 The Gift of Marriage

### WARM-UP

- What's the best gift you have received in the past year?
- How did you meet your spouse, and what do you remember about that moment?
- What do you think your spouse likes the most about you?

**WORD** *Then the man said, "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man."* **GENESIS 2:23**

When God made woman out of man, it was a beautiful moment. Adam said, "at last," speaking of a wait that was finally fulfilled with a bond that could not be broken. After all, Eve is bone of his bones and flesh of his flesh. This is God's work, His creation, and a gift to man. Both the spouse and marriage itself are gifts from God. Based on Genesis 2, what kind of a gift is marriage?

### 1 | Marriage is a gift that is exclusive.

*Then the LORD God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him."* **GENESIS 2:18**

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

**GENESIS 2:24-25**

The word “exclusive” means restricted, excluding, or not admitting others. This is especially true in a marital relationship—it is exclusive only to a husband and a wife.

This exclusive relationship is further solidified when God instructs man to *leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh*. As God has intended marriage to be an exclusive relationship, be faithful to what has been entrusted to you—both the marriage covenant and to your spouse. What does the Bible say about a husband leaving his father and mother in relation to exclusivity in marriage? Why do you think the man is to *hold fast* to his wife?

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## 2 | Marriage is a gift that is personal.

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

### **GENESIS 2:18–20**

Think about it—Adam was tasked to name the animals, but none of these was found to be a suitable helper for him. No animal could complement or fill the relational gap of Adam. God used this as an opportunity to once again show that He is a loving and personal God, by giving Eve as a gift.

The word *helper* in Genesis 2:18 refers to a woman or wife who has been gifted by God with strength. The wife complements her husband in order to accomplish God's purpose for their family, as a left shoe complements a right shoe, or a spoon and a fork.

To be personal also means to be close or dear to someone. Marriage is not meant to be a relationship chosen at random, but something that has been personally chosen. Your spouse is very much a part of you. This is a union of a couple's hearts and lives. How can a husband and wife guard the personal and intimate aspects of their relationship?

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### 3 | Marriage is a gift that has value.

*<sup>21</sup>So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. <sup>22</sup>And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. **GENESIS 2:21-22***

If God made Adam out of the dust, why did God create Eve from Adam's rib? It is to show that Adam's wife was a part of him, one flesh and of equal value as him; she is not inferior. It served as a reminder that they are one. Thus, husbands are to value and *love their wives as their own bodies* (Ephesians 5:28).

God gave husbands and wives as precious gifts to each other. He also instituted the covenant of marriage to be a gift to both as well. Husbands and wives are called to be committed to this wonderful gift of marriage. How have you learned to show your spouse how much you value him or her?

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## APPLICATION

- How can you guard exclusivity in your marriage? What is one thing you would like to do differently, starting today?
- What is one thing you appreciate the most about your spouse? How do you complement one another? Share your answers with each other and encourage one another to value your marriage every day.
- How would you describe your journey in marriage? What insight or lesson would you share with other married or engaged couples?

## PRAYER

- Thank God for His faithfulness upon you, your marriage, and your family. Lift up your needs and concerns to the Lord.
- Ask God for the strength and wisdom you need to recognize and guard your marriage as a gift.
- Pray for opportunities to journey with other couples and help one another honor God in your marriages and families.

# 3 Two Become One

## WARM-UP

- Have you ever pretended to be someone else? Were you effective? How was that experience?
- Who is the best impersonator you know? Recount what he or she does.
- What does being real in your marriage look like? Recall an instance explaining this.

**WORD** <sup>31</sup>*“Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.”*  
<sup>32</sup>*This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.* **EPHESIANS 5:31-32**

(Read also **EPHESIANS 5:26-27**.)

Marriage is God’s design, allowing us to experience a foretaste of heaven on earth. In fact, a marriage is the most intimate way a man and a woman can relate with one another, and is similar to the way we relate with God.

However, the lack of understanding of this design and purpose has caused the opposite effect, resulting in deep hurts, pain, and rejection between a husband and a wife. This is why it is vital to return to one of the bedrock truths about marriage—the covenant union.

The marriage covenant is a solemn and binding agreement made before God. It establishes or seals the relationship between a husband and wife, and is meant to last a lifetime. Understanding the power of covenant will allow couples to walk in the amazing blessings God has prepared for us in the context of the marriage covenant.

There are two wonderful truths Paul referred to about the first marriage and the kind of relationship God originally designed it to be.

## 1 | The marriage union is sacred.

*“Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.”* **EPHESIANS 5:31**

What kind of relationship holds two people together? The words *hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh*, point to something far greater and more permanent than serial marriages and broken promises. These words point to a sacred covenant rooted in covenant commitments.

God is not only intimately involved in joining two people together; He is the initiator of this covenant. He does the joining of a husband and a wife. In the original Greek, the verb *hold fast* is in the passive voice, and is rendered by most modern Bible translations as “be joined” or “be united.” This means that the husband and wife don’t take the ultimate action to join each other. Rather, they are joined together by another, referring to God. This is why, when Jesus quotes Genesis 2:24 in Matthew 19:5–6, He makes explicit the one who joined them: *“What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.”*

Being married, therefore, is not only about being in love. It is also primarily about covenant keeping. “Till death do us part” is a sacred covenant promise—the same kind Jesus made with His bride, the Church, when He died for her.

The power of marriage is more than a man and woman’s love for each other. Rather, it is through the covenant that the Lord initiated when He joined the two into one. This covenant is what makes the marriage permanent, so that we would fulfill our vows, “for as long as we both shall live.”

How does marriage sustain the love between a husband and a wife? How do we guard this sacred union?

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## 2

### The marriage union reflects Christ's relationship with the Church.

*<sup>31</sup>"Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh."<sup>32</sup>This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. **EPHESIANS 5:31-32***

*<sup>25</sup>Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, <sup>26</sup>that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, <sup>27</sup>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. **EPHESIANS 5:25-27***

The original design for marriage is a picture of a mystery that would be revealed in Christ, His union with the Church. It is patterned after Christ's covenant union to the Church.

Leaving the father and mother and holding fast to a wife is meant to display this new covenant—Jesus Christ leaving His Father to be united to His bride. He made an imperfect bride His own at the cost of His life.

No matter how imperfect a marriage is, it is always meant to reflect Christ's love and covenant to His bride, the Church. Marriage is not mainly about being in love. It is about revealing the gospel. Marriage is meant for us to experience love, commitment, forgiveness, acceptance, redemption, and the forging of lives, dreams, and aspirations.

Marriage is not just about love; it is also meant to reflect Christ's union and relationship with His Church to the husband and wife, to the rest of the family, and to all who witness the marriage.

A husband leaving his father and mother and being united to his wife is meant to display how Jesus Christ "left" His Father in heaven to be united to His bride, the Church. And He sacrificed His own life for the Church so that He might redeem, sanctify, and perfect His bride. In the same way, this is to be reflected in the marriage covenant of two imperfect people, where there is personal sacrifice for the benefit of one's spouse.

The ultimate purpose of marriage is to point to Christ and His unwavering commitment to His covenant, that He will never leave nor forsake His bride. How does your marriage reflect God's covenant relationship and Christ's union with the Church?

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## APPLICATION

- Take some time as a couple to forgive one another for hurts you have caused each other in your marriage. Pray for your marriage and renew your commitment to your marriage covenant.
- Do you think your marriage reflects Christ's covenant with the Church? In what areas can your marriage display Christ's love for His bride?
- If God is the initiator of the marriage, do you think God is the sustainer of marriage as well? How will this help couples who are struggling in their married life?

## PRAYER

- Thank God for your marriage and ask God to sustain your relationship. Pray a blessing over your spouse today.
- Pray for the marriages in your Victory group. Ask God to bring grace, healing, and love.
- Pray for your marriage to reflect Christ's love for the Church. Pray that your marriage will make an impact on other marriages and families around you.

## 4 All We Need Is Love

### WARM-UP

- How did you know you had fallen in love with the person who became your spouse?
- What's your favorite *love song*? What do you like about it?
- Who would you say gives in first to meet the needs in your marriage and family? Recall an instance explaining this.

**WORD** *We love because he first loved us.* **1 JOHN 4:19**

*<sup>25</sup>Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, <sup>26</sup>that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, <sup>27</sup>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. <sup>28</sup>In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. <sup>29</sup>For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church . . .* **EPHESIANS 5:25-29**

“All We Need Is Love” is a popular theme about relationships in our culture. Most of the time, love is only based on a perceived feeling and experience (e.g., admiration, sparks, emotions, strong attractions). If this kind of love alone is the foundation of marriage, it will be based on human effort—and eventually, it will be exhausting and is bound to wear us down.

In Ephesians 5, husbands are exhorted to love their wives with the kind of love that Christ loved the Church. As we experience God's love more and more, we can grow in the love that we share in our marriage. What is the nature of love that God bestowed on us that we are to reflect in our marriages?

## 1 | It is a sacrificial love that gives us life.

*<sup>9</sup>In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. <sup>10</sup>In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.*

### 1 JOHN 4:9-10

God gave His only Son to die on the cross for our sins. We now have eternal life and can enjoy our relationship with God because of Christ's sacrifice. Love that is unconditional and sacrificial is essential in our marriages. As we receive Christ's sacrificial love for us and have life by it, we can wholeheartedly give unconditional love to our spouse. How have you learned to reflect God's sacrificial love to your spouse?

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## 2 | It is a relentless love that remains and stays until the end.

*<sup>12</sup>No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us. . . . <sup>16</sup>So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. **1 JOHN 4:12, 16***

A traditional marriage vow contains the phrase “till death do us part.” We expect our marriages to last until the end. But it is only when we experience God’s abiding love for us that we can reflect that kind of love in our marriages as well. As believers, we know that God abides in us, we experience His presence, and He never leaves us. He stays until His love is perfected in us. How has God shown His abiding love to you? How is God’s love the basis for the love in your marriage?

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## 3 | It is a perfect love that casts out fear.

*There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love. **1 JOHN 4:18***

When we receive God’s perfect love, we no longer fear condemnation or judgment. God’s love for us eliminates fear, and this is reflected in our marriage. We can fully give to and receive unconditional love from each other because God bestowed us first with His limitless, unconditional, and perfect love. Consequently, this love is naturally manifested in how we relate with our spouse. When we have experienced this love from God, we are able to love in a way

that neither condemns nor judges our spouse. We do not keep a record of wrongs, and we accept each other. Our love for one another is not perfect, but God's love is perfect and it is being perfected in us. How does this verse explain fear and love? What does *perfect love* do to *fear*?

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By the grace of God, as we grow in our marriage, we are to rely on and reflect the sacrificial, relentless, and perfect love we have experienced from God. As an overflow of God's love, this is how we are to love our spouse.

## APPLICATION

- Identify an area of your life where you need to experience God's sacrificial love. How can you grow in your understanding of God's love for you this week?
- Identify an unresolved hurt in your relationship and talk to your spouse about it. Ask for forgiveness from one another.
- What is one thing you can do to strengthen your relationship with your spouse? Determine how you can spend more uninterrupted time together this week.

## PRAYER

- Thank God for His unconditional love for you. Ask God to transform you to be the kind of believer and spouse He wants you to be.
- Take time to repent for the times and areas in your life wherein you have not demonstrated love in your marriage and that may have damaged an aspect of your relationship. Ask God for forgiveness.
- Pray that you will always show God's sacrificial, relentless, and perfect love to your spouse. Ask God's help to choose to love, even in difficult moments or seasons.

*<sup>18</sup>The LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him." . . . <sup>22</sup>Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man. . . . <sup>24</sup>Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.*

**GENESIS 2:18, 22, 24**

Marriage is one of the most important human relationships. Some see marriage as a partnership where two people agree to be together in order to enjoy the economic, social, emotional, and physical benefits the partnership brings. However, it is clear in Scriptures that marriage is more than just a partnership. In this material, we will talk about God's original design for marriage. We will study the Biblical foundations that will help transform us to reflect God's image and make our marriage flourish—just as God designed.

## **TOPICS**

- In the Beginning
- The Gift of Marriage
- Two Become One
- All We Need Is Love



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