

# CHAPTER 1

## *Essence: Designed by Christ*

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*Then God blessed them and said, “Be fruitful and multiply.*

*Fill the earth and govern it.”*

*(Gen. 1:28)*

### *Day 1*

“THE TIMES, THEY are a-changin’.”<sup>1</sup> Marriage is being redefined. Is it our privilege to change the definition? God designed marriage to be an interpersonal covenant with Christ between a man and a woman that is established, maintained, and enforced by God’s authority. Wedding ceremonies often include the quote from Mark 10:9, “What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate” (ESV). And “As the Scriptures say, ‘A man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one.’ This is a great mystery, but it is an illustration of the way Christ and the church are one” (Eph. 5:31–32). But how do these verses impact our marriages?

The mystery of marriage originated and was instituted by God for the purpose of revealing heavenly truths through a tangible means on earth. Paul was so taken by this mystery that he asserted this truth is great, profound, and of mega importance. The Greek word *mysterion* conveys “the content of that which has not been known before but which has been revealed to an in-group or restricted constituency.”<sup>2</sup> Christ-followers occupying the roles of husband and wife are the in-group commissioned to be the artistic pigment that Christ desires to use to paint His portrait on the canvas of the world.

Transformed souls, who by faith have accepted Christ’s forgiveness for having lived by their own standards, are necessary for bearing this image. Marriage begins to reach

its potential when two lives embrace a committed relationship with Jesus Christ that reflects hearts given to the will and purpose of God. There can be no greater evidence of our faith, nor can there be any greater reason for our faith than to express the very life that is in Christ.

Marriages that minister depict a portrait of the redemptive reunion affording an inseparable oneness between the Divine and His bride. Though marriages inhabit a human plane, they are to provide anointed examples of the intimate connection that exists in the spiritual realm between Christ and His church. Our marriages must uphold this sacred trust given by God's design while revealing His mystery to the world.

God has now revealed to us his mysterious plan regarding Christ, a plan to fulfill his own good pleasure. And this is the plan: At the right time he will bring everything together under the authority of Christ—everything in heaven and on earth. Furthermore, because we are united with Christ, we have received an inheritance from God, for he chose us in advance, and he makes everything work out according to his plan.

—Eph. 1:9–11

To *minister*, by definition, means to provide something necessary or helpful to attend to the needs of someone.<sup>3</sup> A marriage that ministers provides a necessary, helpful example to a hurting world gone awry. Offering hope to weary hearts and lives, our marriages can exhibit the abundance that Christ freely supplies to those who depend on Him. Our triumphant testimony can tell of an all-sufficient Christ who fills the void of all that is lacking.

As stewards of our marital relationship, we are commissioned to depict an accurate portrait of Christ to the onlooking world. My identity in Christ defines the perimeters of our identity as a husband and wife within the context of marriage. Identity is God's perspective of me. Intimacy embraces God's perspective of me, thereby drawing me into spiritual connections. On the basis of my intimate identity, industry compels me to action. Once I am convinced of my identity, I can be connected in intimacy and be compelled to industry to accomplish His good pleasure. This is what we call the **iProcess**.

Since marriage mirrors Christ's relationship with the church, I must embrace my identity as a member of His church and translate this perspective into a demonstration of my identity as a spouse. This realization will move me to a renewed comprehension

of the intimacy I may enjoy as a part of the body of Christ that should be reflected in our intimacy as husband and wife. The conception of my intimate identity compels me to live out my salvation with an awareness of my responsibility as a part of the body of Christ and illustrate this industry within our marriage. “This is a great mystery, but it is an illustration of the way Christ and the church are one” (Eph. 5:32). An elaboration of this construct will continue throughout the book.

## Insight Journal

Do I believe only Christians can have a good marriage? Why or why not?

## *Day 2*

**IDENTITY: We are Christ’s creation for His purpose.**

So God created mankind in his own image,  
in the image of God he created them;  
male and female he created them.

—Gen. 1:27 NIV

The image of God within forms my identity as Christ’s creation fashioned for His purpose. In the beginning God created man and woman as the embodiment of His essence here on earth. At the dawn of the human race Adam and Eve put on their identity bestowed by God. Together they were to serve as vice-regents of His earthly realm. “And God blessed them. And God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth’” (Gen. 1:28 *ESV*).

The unit formed by the union of the original husband and wife was charged to accomplish the edicts of God’s good pleasure. Neither man nor woman could separately achieve the intended destiny. Marriage supplied the necessary structure to fulfill the will of God that would propagate the stability of a holy society. God drafted a covenant to weave the fabric of family into a tapestry of culture.

As Creator, God rightly designated the terms of the covenant with Christ between a man and a woman. Jesus draws upon this event in history while emphasizing the Father's heart concerning matrimony and establishing the permanency of marriage as the standard designed by God.

He answered, "Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'? So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate."

—Matt. 19:4–6 ESV

The original passage suggests that Adam entered into a monogamous covenant with Eve that would span through eternity. "Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh" (Gen. 2:24 ESV). The Hebrew word for woman derived its meaning from this occasion and stresses the identity of Eve being a wife to whom Adam committed himself in loyalty. In essence, Adam bonded with Eve and then consummated their covenant by becoming one. The Hebrew word for *hold fast* carries the sense of clinging to someone in affection and loyalty.<sup>4</sup> There is little doubt that Adam did what God created him to do. Adam and Eve connected, bonded, and committed to each other forming an attachment that would structure the solid establishment of civilization.

The consecrated family foundation formed community into a God-centered economy with oneness of soul, heart, mind, and purpose. We were not created to live separately from God's pattern. His innate image intended to produce His essence throughout the earth so that we could joyfully experience the blessing of His endless grace.

As a result of Adam and Eve's sinful rebellion against God, the image of God, the institution of God, and the inspiration of God became distorted. Only an obscure reflection of the original remained. God's image within humanity was marred by their mutiny. Holiness was no longer tenable, therefore the potential to fulfill God's ideal was no longer attainable. Divine intervention was required or else all would be lost.

## Insight Journal

How does our marriage show forth Christ?

## Day 3

### INTIMACY: God designed complete union and communion with Himself.

The establishment of marriage came after the completion of creation—after the pronouncement of things that were good in the sight of God. Genesis 2:18 states, “The Lord God said, ‘It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a companion for him who corresponds to him’” (NET). God was not correcting a mistake with the creation of Eve but unfolding the next step of His plan. She was not created to complete Adam but that the two would enjoy companionship and so express themselves relationally. God did not design people with needs that would be met independently of Himself. Only through Christ can our relationships ever achieve any of God’s purpose.

According to the *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, the core concept is that it was not good for man “to be separate and isolated.”<sup>5</sup> This passage denotes the principle that God designed humankind to live within society; therefore it would not be good for him to be alone or the only one of his kind. The marriage relationship was not intended to serve as a replacement for a personal relationship with Him. God fashioned marriage in order that through sanctified, intimate companionship His will would be established within the earth so His portrait may hang upon every heart, mind, and soul that dwells within the earth.

Then the Lord God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper who is just right for him.” So the Lord God formed from the ground all the wild animals and all the birds of the sky. He brought them to the man to see what he would call them, and the man chose a name for each one. He gave names to all the livestock, all the birds of the sky, and all the wild animals. But still there was no helper just right for him. So the Lord God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep. While the man slept, the Lord God took out one of the man’s ribs and closed up the opening. Then the Lord God made a woman from the rib, and he brought her to the man.

—Gen. 2:18–22

It is hard to imagine what Adam felt after awaking from surgery to cast his gaze on a creature he had never seen, especially after spending such a deliberate extent of time closely surveying every species of animal created upon the face of the earth. The magnitude

of naming every living thing could have taken Adam months to complete, perhaps even longer. Now Adam beholds his partner for the first time. The beauty of this union was epic and a moment in time God captured and preserved for all in memorial to behold. The Scripture records this sublime occasion in Genesis 2:23.

“At last!” the man exclaimed.

“This one is bone from my bone,  
and flesh from my flesh!

She will be called ‘woman,’  
because she was taken from ‘man.’”

The Hebrew pronoun *zeh*, translated “this one,”<sup>6</sup> is demonstrative and can be rendered “such a one as this is bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh” intimating a sense of musing and awe of deep appreciation for what God had wrought.

Adam’s shared identity with Eve as Christ’s creation moved them to intimate connectedness. Oneness, expressed in the phrase “and they shall become one flesh” (Gen. 2:24 ESV), demanded a process of personal change. This bonding would give life a new identity whereby individuality would become the servant of interpersonal intimacy.

“And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed” (Gen. 2:25 ESV). The fact that the man and woman possessed no shame indicates the absence of any moral conflict. They were living together in love, joy, and peace. The couple communed with their Creator continuously experiencing resonate harmony. Existence assumed a three-part union comprised of God, Adam, and Eve. Daily they walked with God in complete fulfillment. The triune intimacy formed a relational matrix binding each together with inseparable oneness. The couple followed God’s heart into spiritual union. Indivisible communion punctuated their endeavor as the companions exercised dominion over creation.

“As the Scriptures say, ‘A man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one’” (Eph. 5:31). The two joined together in covenant faithfulness with the God who also designed complete union and communion with Himself. God established a beautiful synthesis of divinity and humanity. His presence dwelt with human beings in an intimacy that was never to be broken.

All that was created, fashioned, and ordered to give humanity the fullness of God’s blessing was betrayed in exchange for what people could separately provide. Perfect triune

communion was rejected for the alluring promise of completeness apart from union with God. A Savior was required to restore the broken intimacy.

## Insight Journal

I think God established marriage because . . .

### *Day 4*

**INDUSTRY: We are God’s stewards to fill the earth and govern it.**

Originally the dominion of Adam extended over created beings. “Then God said, ‘Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground’” (Gen. 1:26 NIV). In this theocracy God rules and people follow. Subsequently, in following God, man leads others.

The established government under Adam’s rule was designed to abide by the edicts of God. Without fanfare, pomp, or circumstance, Adam quietly assumed the leadership God assigned, which conferred authority along with accountability for the earth. Adam’s responsibility was to exercise wisdom in keeping with the heart and mind of God while seeking the best interest of both man and beast.

Even before the creation of Eve, Adam was divinely designated as leader. God ordained him and specified his duties. “The Lord God placed the man in the Garden of Eden to tend and watch over it. But the Lord God warned him, ‘You may freely eat the fruit of every tree in the garden—except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. If you eat its fruit, you are sure to die’” (Gen. 2:15–17). The man was admonished by God personally and invested with a sacred trust.

“Then the Lord God said, ‘It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper who is just right for him’” (Gen. 2:18). The word *helper* “is more frequently used in a concrete sense to designate the assistant,”<sup>7</sup> thereby highlighting Adam’s responsibility to lead and Eve’s responsibility to assist him in leading. Adam’s obligation was to educate his wife in the guidelines pleasing to Elohim while kindly mentoring her in ways conducive to establishing a lifestyle honoring to God’s will. This would also

include Adam making known to Eve how she could best assist him. Husbands need to differentiate between being assisted and being served. Many husbands are guilty of oppressing their wives by demanding that she serve, when God wills only for her to assist in the pursuit of godliness.

Together the first couple pursued the common goal of fulfilling God's purpose with Adam as the leader and Eve as his divinely given helper. Eve was never to be considered inferior—her role would be complementary to Adam's. It is interesting that God did not initially instruct Eve to submit or follow but rather to help. This word *helper* is used frequently of God in the Old Testament reminding us that a wife reflects godliness when she offers assistance.

Behold, God is my helper;  
the Lord is the upholder of my life.

—Ps. 54:4 ESV

Eve possessed the spirit of God's propensity to help those in need. She would join with Adam on his quest of God's extraordinary assignment to bring a godly society into existence.

Created as the reflection of God's image upon the earth and their hearts intertwined with the heart of God, Adam and Eve served as His stewards to fill the earth and govern it. "God blessed them; and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth'" (Gen. 1:28 NASB). The marital construct serves as the integral foundation conducive to living out God-ordained stewardship. Together the man and the woman enabled by God's blessing could achieve the directives delegated. Everything would be the productive outcome of their oneness in marriage. God chose marriage as the institution that would establish and maintain the order of His creation.

## Insight Journal

I would describe Adam's original job as . . .

I would describe Eve's original job as . . .

## Day 5

“Raising faithful children is a part of God’s creation plan for mankind. God’s creation plan is that the whole earth should be populated by those who know him and who serve wisely as his vice-regents or representatives.”<sup>8</sup> Family formed the basis of community, establishing a God-centered society that would propagate His will to the ends of the earth. Civilization was to reflect one large interconnected substructure of intimate gathering, governed by a providential need to connect as God relates within His Holy Trinity—oneness of soul, heart, mind, and purpose. With a divine epicenter the economy would experience oneness through Him. Endowed with God’s image, each family member could convey the distinctive norm of holiness in a dedicated culture. We were not created to live separately from God’s pattern. The triunity necessitates a dependent relationship enabled by God to equip us to live a life afforded by grace.

Upon filling the earth, Adam and Eve were called by God to also subdue it. The essential meaning of the term is to bring under authority. God gave them dominion, then He commanded them to exercise authority over the earth. Adam and Eve’s challenge was in wielding their God-given capacity to utilize earth’s natural resources as a means of working, keeping, and protecting the integrity of what God had entrusted to them. Additionally, they were on the precipice of launching a civilization that would propagate forever. There would be exceptional needs for a race of people without sin who would never know death or even sickness. The new creation provided food, technology, artistic interest, and adventures in service to a master made in the image of God. Living together with God and in complete communion with His creation afforded rewarding, meaningful service.

God’s purpose for the earth is that it should become his dwelling place; it is not simply made to house his creatures. . . . The concept of the earth as a divine sanctuary . . . runs throughout the whole Bible, coming to a climax in the future reality that the apostle John sees in his vision of a “new heaven and a new earth” in Rev. 21:1–22:5. . . . The overall picture of Eden presented . . . suggests that the park-like garden is part of a divine sanctuary. The man is put in the garden to work it and keep it. . . . The man’s role is to be not only a gardener but also a guardian. As a priest, he is to maintain the sanctity of the garden as part of a temple complex.<sup>9</sup>

Identity structured Adam and Eve's souls to connect relationally with God's heart, compelling them to passionately embrace His agenda. With authority granted by God, they were to live as co-regents maintaining God's pleasure and serving the interest of their Creator. They knew God's will and the reason they existed. The most honored of God's creatures created in His image were charged with the high occupation of governing, protecting, replenishing, working, and keeping the garden of God. The privileged couple preserved the sanctuary that radiated His glory. As stewards their purpose was not constructed around an egocentric agenda but a divine design, a paradigm implementing God's plan to maintain the order that reflected His radiance. The work of man is to bring glory to God.

## Insight Journal

I understand *triunity* to mean . . .

## Day 6

Today we struggle to envision this lost civilization now covered by the dross of sin and overgrown by the vines of selfish ambition and vain conceit. Tempted by the satanic invitation to find completeness apart from Christ, the couple's choice doomed the world. The angelic sentinel with flaming sword barred sinful humanity from influence in the garden. The divine design was so completely shattered that nothing short of a divine solution would remedy the brokenness. Redemption was now required. God in His great kindness made a way for us to enter again into His fellowship. Christ would redeem the fallen race, restoring us to consecrated leadership in service to Him if we accept His offer.

Once in His employ, we are sanctified by God's supreme order to portray His offer of reconciliation through covenant union with Christ. Marriage is the modern garden of Eden, and we, as God's stewards, are called to keep it. When people gaze upon our marriage, God's heart desires that they see the gospel in living color. "And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself" (John 12:32 *ESV*). Christian marriages possess the healing balm for a world poisoned by the serpent of sin. Dying from the venom of sin, others should be able to look at our marriage and see Christ to receive

deliverance from the pursuing death and impending doom. “And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life” (John 3:14–15 ESV).

The day we become husband and wife, God sets us apart with a blessed anointing and an inspired identity commissioned by God’s sovereign will to be curators of His divine portrait. Marriage, the hallowed ground where burns the bush of God’s presence atop the mountain of our influence, proclaims to the world the redemptive relationship between Christ and His church. As divinely enabled stewards we are empowered to maintain the unity of our faith through our oneness in marriage. “For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do” (Eph. 2:10 NIV).

## **Insight Journal**

How is our marriage like the garden of Eden?