



# Reclaiming the Heart of Marriage

## God calls us to a renewed life, but it still takes patience, sacrifice, discipline and compassion.

by **Daniel L. Weiss**

*"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth..."*

These words are as familiar to us as "Once upon a time ..."— and, unfortunately, sometimes as insignificant. Many—including some Christians—consider the Bible's creation to be a children's story or a fairy tale. We rush past the foundation and go straight to the punch line—the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Yet, the beginning of human history holds far more significance for our lives today than many realize.

Jesus thought it important. When grilled about the relations between husbands and wives—specifically divorce—Christ subverted the petty selfishness and encrusted legalism that had sprung up around marriage by returning to this ancient truth:

*"Haven't you read ... that at the beginning the Creator 'made them male and female' and said, 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh'? So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together let man not separate" (Matthew 19:4-6, NIV).*

But Jesus' questioners persisted:

*"Why then," they asked, "did Moses command that a man give his wife a certificate of divorce and send her away?" (Matthew 19:7, NIV)*

His reply illuminates that old creation story with a power and life. He said:

*"Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard. But it was not this way in the beginning" (Matthew 19:8, NIV)*

Jesus wasn't making a casual statement about the fallen world. He was directing us to meditate on God's design for humanity in the beginning—the design that was twisted and shattered when Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden.

God said:

*Let us make man in our image, in our likeness ...  
So God created man in his own image,  
in the image of God he created him;  
Male and female he created them (Genesis 1:26,27, NIV)*

How often have husbands and wives considered the truth that each bears the image and likeness of God? More important, how many realize they reflect God's image and likeness at least as much, if not more in their one-flesh union than each does separately?

By pointing us back to the beginning, Jesus wanted us to understand this vital revelation: God created humans for intimate unions that model the intimate union shared by members of the Triune God. He said, "Let US make man in OUR image and likeness." God's great gift to His children was the ability to share in the divine love existing before time.

Perhaps this is not the character of your marriage. Your one-flesh union may have been ravaged by infidelity, pornography use, illness, bitterness, selfishness, neglect, or abuse. You may love your spouse but also feel, at times, like strangling him. Separation may seem like the only available option. Or, maybe the kids are gone and you find an empty marriage to match your empty house.

Life is hard. Some have called it a "vale of tears." When Adam and Eve sinned, they endured "painful toil" working the cursed ground of "thorns and thistles" (Genesis 3:17-19, NIV). Our hearts have also suffered the devastation of the Fall. We daily battle the thorns and thistles—pride, bitterness, lust, greed, envy—that threaten to choke our fragile stirrings of love.

This makes marriage difficult. We often see our spouse as the enemy, rather than an extension of ourselves. Our one-flesh union may be lacking all emotional, mental, and spiritual aspects and be relegated to quick couplings born of frustration or desperation. And we wonder where God is in all of this.

After directing us back to the beginning, Jesus provided a way for us to return to God's design for our lives and marriages. He finished His atonement for our sins on the cross and promised a new life in Him. The Bible teaches that if we have been baptized into His death, we are also baptized into His new life (Romans 6:3-4, NIV). This is our hope and His promise. The life God gives is one restored, redeemed, and transformed.

This is not some hyper-spiritualized pipe dream. God calls us to a renewed life, but it still takes patience, sacrifice, discipline, and compassion. But God is with us every step of the way, working through His Spirit to restore everything that has been damaged. Listen for God's call to this transformed life and hold tight to the promise of the One who said, "Behold, I am making all things new."

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