

Living Together is not the same Relationship as Being Married
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INTRODUCTION

The line of thought that follows began with a question posed to me in 2013 by a high school senior boy. We were several days into our summer work on the farm, when he asked, "Is living together the same as being married?"

My first response to a question such as that is often, "Why do you ask?" Getting the answer to that question can sometimes help me to zero in on where to start my response, which is to apply what I am convinced is the truth found in the Word of God.

The young man went on to explain the education he was receiving at a local Christian school, and how it had many rules without an explanation or application. He had been taught that living together was not the same thing as being married, that it was wrong.

The young man was in a predicament. He didn't want to ignore the teaching he had received, believing it to be Biblical. He also didn't want to make life decisions without relevant meaning. It seemed that what he needed me to help him with was a meaningful explanation of why living together is not the same as being married.

As we continued to dig the holes for our fence posts, I could hardly contain my enthusiasm for the conversation we had embarked upon. The Spirit of God, the young man and I were about to have a lot of fun. What follows in this little book is the line of discussion the three of us had over the next several days. As you think through this with us, you'll be proud of the truth.

PREFACE

The following material is written foremost to believers — followers of Christ Jesus. If you are not a follower, the material will likely offend you. It is not my goal to offend. But just as a yardstick offends anything not thirty-six inches long, so the truth in the Bible (God's word) offends. In that sense I am okay with you being offended, because the Truth is known to offend me as well. The offense of Truth simply reveals our need for close relationship with God. Humble yourself, and welcome the Truth to do its work.

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that a Christian worldview on marriage will have on a society.*

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SECTION ONE

CHAPTER ONE: A FAMILY UNIT

The young man and I started in the beginning, well not literally “in the beginning” of creation (Genesis 1:1), but with the first relationship between two married people. Here begins why I believe this statement to be absolutely true – *it is impossible to exaggerate the healing effect that a Christian worldview on marriage will have on a society.*

A new family unit is formed when a man leaves his father and mother and joins with his wife, Genesis 2:23-24. Note this is looking forward, being prophetic. It is God’s plan for marriage. It is not a cultural definition of marriage, because there is no father and mother preceding Adam for him to leave in order to cleave to Eve. My mother has told me there is a picture of me next to those verses in her Bible. Now that I have two grown sons married to wonderful ladies, I realize the words of my mom are not meant to be a compliment to me. Nevertheless, I like them just the same.

A new family unit is formed when a man leaves and cleaves. He stops depending on his parents to provide for him, and he attaches himself to the well being of his wife. The man gives his life away to love this woman. Notice at this point in the family unit there are no children. There is one man and one woman who have made an agreement to begin a new family. As with each truth that follows, that knowledge is part of what adds up to a meaningful understanding of a Biblical marriage.

A family unit is monogamous, it is between two people, and only two people, “But because of immoralities, each man is to have his own wife, and each woman is to have her own husband,” 1 Corinthians 7:2. It is also God’s design that a family unit be an inseparable union, 1 Corinthians 7.

CHAPTER TWO: A FAMILY UNIT IS NOT SAME SEX

Now here is where you may choose to disagree with my understanding of the Word of God, and explore a different train of thought. I have no expectation for you to agree with what follows, although you may. I only ask that you read on, because just as with my own life, you may discover that your disagreement reveals your need. You may need to change your mind about the Scriptures, or give yourself to a relationship with the God of the Bible – the Father, the Son and the Spirit.

However, if you believe you have already given your heart and life to follow the way of Jesus, and you are in disagreement at this point, I ask you to not pick and choose what you will take literally from God’s Word as truth to live by. Some sections of God’s Word are proverbs and parables, and are identified as so; statements and stories woven with meaning to learn from. Romans 1:20-27 is not among those stories. If you as a believer refuse to hear and apply Romans 1, you have placed yourself as the authority in your life. You are making a futile challenge to God’s authority over you, and at a minimum casting suspicion on your true allegiance.

Romans 1:18 teaches that there remain individuals who know some truth about God, and by their own behavior try to hide this truth about God from others. As a result, living in darkness they make gross mistakes when trying to determine right from wrong, Romans 1:21. They don’t reason well, and the darkness coming over them makes it harder and harder to exercise wisdom, Romans 1:21, 22.

God, knowing that mankind wasn’t going to like the consequences of defining their own truth to live by, still allowed mankind to experience their attempt to live a meaningful life, Romans 1:24. He did so with a foremost desire that they would return to Him, Romans 2:4.

One of the results of the desire to be our own leader in sexuality is stated in

Romans 1:24. "...their bodies would be dishonored among them." That can be understood as the ongoing result of being your own leader in sexuality is to experience shame among like-minded peers. That can happen in every kind of sexual relationship.

It is with much sensitivity that I retell the two following true events from my life. I only do so, because they are meaningful events that apply to our subject in relevant ways.

THE FATHER RUNS TO YOU

In early 1991, a 30-year old man and I sat within a local hamburger restaurant to compare notes about life. We hadn't seen or spoken to one another in more than ten years. A big reason we had parted ways in high school was because he was "gay" (his words), and I was not.

The current circumstances of our young lives had brought us back together. He had called me to discuss how the two of us could help someone we both cared a lot about. I welcomed his call, and immediately stopped in my work. I asked the caller to meet me face-to face, and he agreed. In the back of my mind, it was exciting to think that maybe we could mend the fence broken in our youth.

Seeing one another at the restaurant, there was some uncertainty in the air. Nevertheless on this day, we immediately shook hands and sat down. He began our conversation by openly acknowledging his lifestyle, and apologizing for the problems it had created between us. I politely heard him out, but I didn't allow him to carry the full weight of the years lost. I immediately apologized as well. Following is how and why I apologized.

While I acknowledged that I remained in disagreement with his lifestyle and life choices, I now explained to him that I had come to realize something about sin. Sin is foremost an indicator of need, and in that sense there was now no more offense for me of his sin than for my own. I encouraged him to accept and live in the same freedom I was finding in relationship to Christ Jesus.

The few words immediately spoken that day, both his and mine, seemed to give us enough respect for one another to discuss what we might be able to do together. We spent more than two hours respectfully, and with increased eagerness, catching up on one another's life. It was probably the most fun we had ever had together, since meeting as young children.

One thing he told me during our conversation revealed another motive for his call. As if the struggles of our common friend wasn't enough for us to process, the man sitting before me was dying. The "alternative lifestyle disease" as it was then called, AIDS, had entered his body. Because it was the early 90's, AIDS medicine was in its infancy and few people lived more than six months once diagnosed. The man told me that he wanted his sister and I to know. His plan was to go away after he and I made a plan to help our common friend. He had decided that it would be best for him to die away from his family, leaving them to find out why later.

A few months later, my phone rang again. The father of the young man with AIDS was calling to tell me his son was sick with the flu at a local hospital. I knew it was more than the flu. Once again, I left my work and went to where my friend was. As I walked into the room, he lay there struggling to live. No one else was in the room. No one.

My friend was cold and sick, swollen with fluids and still. The room was dimly lit. I carefully reached my arms around him and pulled him close to say, "Hello. When you get well enough to leave, you can come to my house." He acknowledged what I had said, but with little response due to the weakness of his physical condition.

The next ten weeks at the hospital would give my friend many ups and downs.

He and I had as great a time as we could, spending nearly every day eating lunch together in his private room. It was during those 40 or more conversations that he revealed many of the struggles of the past 12 or so years. On one occasion he said to me, "I don't know why we (he and his once like-minded friends) call it (our lifestyle) 'gay.' There is nothing gay about it. We know what we are doing is wrong, and we do it all the more to try and ignore what we know."

My friend did not realize how what he said lined up with Romans 1.

Because I had known him and his family since our childhood, I could say my friend was an individual who knew some truth about God. Yet, by his own behavior he had tried to hide that truth about God from himself and others. As a result he had made gross mistakes when trying to determine right from wrong. He hadn't reasoned well, and the resulting darkness over him had made it harder and harder to live his life with wisdom.

In our time together I quickly realized that in recent months my friend had come to trust Jesus, finding peace with Him. Now he was finding peace with some others, such as me, around him before he left us.

My friend would never leave that hospital without leaving this world. However, he didn't leave us before he celebrated several passages of Scriptures. The truth of Job's life and the parable of the Prodigal Son kept my friend encouraged during those final weeks. He found great comfort that others had shared and survived such deep personal struggles like him. He tenderly spoke of what he described as his unmerited and most longing hope, to be welcomed by a loving Father face to face. *"So he got up and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion for him, and ran and embraced him and kissed him,"* Luke 15:20.

Since the funeral of my friend, I have framed and kept a large picture in my office of what his embrace with the Father may have looked like. It is an honor and an encouragement for me to have that picture, and the memory of our friendship that it represents.

A BRIDGE

During the summer of 2012, I came together with a hundred or so people who had joined to feed several hundred homeless people gathered under a bridge in a major southern city of the United States. I had done this before, but this time the experience was different for several reasons.

One difference was the effect a man in his early thirties had on me there. I had never met him prior to that day. Just before we distributed the meals, the man chose to speak openly to many of us. He told us of how God had met him where he was in life, and how God had rescued him. I was eager to hear more from this young man. God Rescue stories are among the stuff that explains Him to me.

Unexpectedly to me, the young man began to speak of what it was like to have chosen to live a gay lifestyle for 15 years. He spoke of the darkness; the depression and the desire to die that accompanied him each day. There was frankness in his words as he spoke to us of the ongoing shame among his peers. The shame alone had nearly crushed him.

He recounted for us how six years prior to meeting us tonight, while sitting alone in his apartment not far from the bridge, a thought entered his mind. The thought went something like this. "The prayers of your family have reached Me. Today, I am going to deliver you." The man telling the story said it was as if light and peace now entered his world, and while sitting alone he responded by giving his life to the Lord at that same moment. He walked out of his apartment, and the once dark world was now full of light. He has never looked back to his former way of living.

As he continued speaking to us, tears filled his eyes when he told of his wife and daughter as the present tense witness to him and the world that God does deliver out of darkness. The loyalty of this man was humbling to me.

The lives of the man from my teenage years, and the man I met at the bridge, explain in relevant ways the consequences of knowing some truth about God, and by your own behavior trying to hide that truth about Him from yourself and others.

A biblical family unit is not same sex, regardless of how the norms of any society describe it otherwise. Trying to hide that truth results in darkness around you that makes it harder and harder to live with wisdom.

If sexual sin of any kind represents one of your struggles, the grace of God (the right understanding and power to deal with it) is not offended. He is big enough to help. Turn to Him, and experience your own rescue.

CHAPTER THREE: SEX WITH ANOTHER PERSON DOES NOT MAKE A FAMILY UNIT

In the church at Corinth, it is recorded that a man was having sex with his stepmother, 1 Corinthians 5. The other believers meeting in that gathering had actually become proud of their ability to live with and around the couple's behavior. Today, we associate that way of thinking with being tolerant, as if such tolerance is a Christian virtue. When in fact, in that situation, tolerance is the capacity to endure continued subjection to something that is harmful without having an adverse reaction to it. In other words, they knew the behavior of the couple was harmful, and the unanswered question was 'how long can it be endured before someone gets hurt?' All people are welcome among the Church, but not all behaviors.

It is said of the believers in Corinth that they "have become arrogant and have not mourned instead," 1 Corinthians 5:2. The behavior of the man with his stepmother, himself apparently claiming to be a believer among them, should have wounded and shocked those gathering as a church. The group as a whole should have responded with grief as severe as if someone among them had died. They should have called the man to account for his wrong, in an effort to awaken him to his need for further intimacy with God.

As with many within Christendom today, these folks at Corinth had confused Biblical tolerance as respecting everyone's right to choose for themselves. Yet for the believer, he or she has given God the claim to direct their body, 1 Timothy 3:14-15. As applied to the believer, biblical tolerance is better understood as long suffering towards living righteously. Biblical tolerance is not a reference to doing as you please, Romans 2:4, 3:25. The long suffering of Biblical tolerance finds its fulfillment in accountability, with a responsibility to God and man to live righteously and not recklessly.

CHAPTER FOUR: LIVING WITH ANOTHER PERSON DOES NOT MAKE THEM YOUR SPOUSE

Jesus and the twelve were headed north from Judea to Galilee. In order to do that, they could cross over east of the Jordan River and head north, or go straight north through Samaria. The Father told Jesus to choose the straight path that day.

The problem with traveling through Samaria was significant to many, if not all, of the twelve. In Samaria, should they need to find lodging they could not. In Samaria, should they find food, Samaritans would break the plates they each ate from when they completed the meal. Both being among the responses of the Samaritans to the Jewish people traveling in their region.

As Jesus and the twelve traveled through Samaria, He stopped at a well of water

to rest, John 4. It was noon, and the twelve headed into town to find some carryout food. While Jesus waited at the well, a woman approached to pull up some water from the same well. Jesus asked her to provide a drink for Him from the water she was getting for herself.

As the conversation between the two of them continued, Jesus asked the woman to go find her husband, and to bring him to the well, John 4:16. She responded to Jesus by saying that she had no husband. Jesus agreed with her response, John 4:17. He went on to say that the woman had five previous husbands, and "*the one whom you now have is not your husband,*" John 4:18. In response to her sin, the woman immediately began to look for God, John 4:19-20.

Clearly, based upon this discussion between Jesus and the woman, neither living with another person or having sex with them make them your spouse.

Section Two

Having now referenced our accepted standard for truth, God's Word, to answer the original question "Is living together the same thing as being married," the young man and I turned our attention to some new questions resulting from our conversation.

CHAPTER FIVE: HOW DOES MARRIAGE BEFORE GOD DIFFER FROM LIVING TOGETHER?

Marriage before God begins with a covenant, followed by a public display.

Proverbs 2:1-11, 16-17, Ezekiel 16:8-14 and Malachi 2:13-14 come to my mind as among the many Scriptures you can reference for an example of a marriage covenant. In Ezekiel 16:8-14 we read about the covenant being experienced through words and symbols. In verse 8 it is written, "I covered your nakedness." In verse 11 we learn that the woman was adorned with bracelets, and a necklace. In verse 13 we read of her dress, "your dress was of fine linen, silk and embroidered cloth." Verse 13 concludes with the woman being "advanced to royalty" in how she was openly treated.

A covenant is confirmed before witnesses. Among the witnesses are heaven and earth, the Lord, the priest and other people. You can learn that by reading Deuteronomy 30:15-19, 31:28; 32:1, 1 Samuel 20:18-23, Isaiah 1:1-2 and Isaiah 8:1-2.

Today, a believer can find a familiar example of this truth of expressing a covenant through words and symbols within New Testament believer's baptism. In displaying a good conscience, the believer publicly enters into this new allegiance or covenant with God through baptism. Baptism publicly demonstrates the believer's commitment for this new allegiance to become a reality in their life. At the point of salvation, the believer made a covenant with God. At the point of water baptism before others, the believer openly declared the covenant he or she had made. Without publicly entering into this new allegiance, Peter would ask if a person ever entered into it at all, Acts 2:37-41; 16:31-33 1 Peter 3:13-22. Read that previous sentence again, applying it to the biblical covenant of marriage.

The events surrounding Boaz and Ruth make it especially obvious that a marriage covenant involves a public display of the covenant. Ruth asks Boaz to show his acceptance of her as his wife by spreading his "covering over your maid" Ruth 3:9. In Ruth 4:1-14 we read of Boaz's response being displayed publicly before witnesses. He openly promised before his peers and the Lord to take care of Ruth.

Section Three

At this point in our discussion, the young man and I were increasingly proud of the Truth. As he was now experiencing the relevance of the Scripture, the young man wanted his peers to know what he was learning. Knowing of an upcoming opportunity where he and I could discuss that with them, I considered that it would please the Lord for us to give it a try.

The conversation with his peers included many of mine as well. It would last about 12 hours, spread over four consecutive days in a retreat setting. Our friends heard us out, and they brought forward some questions of their own. Following is what they asked, and our conclusions. Keep in mind the group now consisted of more than 140 professing believers from the ages of 13-73. Approximately 110 of them were ages 13-18, as well as several seasoned pastors from various parts of the United States.

CHAPTER SIX: IS MARRIAGE DEFINED BY CULTURE?

No. Marriage before God has never been defined by culture, meaning to be defined by *relating to the normal ideas, customs and social behavior of a society*. Understanding that was one of the most fruitful things that happened in our group discussion. It likely had an equally encouraging affect on the apostle Paul as he wrote to the church at Ephesus. Following is how we tracked with Paul's thinking in that letter.

Men nourish and cherish their wife because of the union she has with him — doing what is best for her, Ephesians 5:28-29a. Jesus nourishes and cherishes the Church because of the union she has with Him — doing what is best for her, Ephesians 5:28-30. It is because Christ Jesus has done that, that a man is to *leave and cleave* to do the same for his wife, Genesis 2:24, Ephesians 5:31-32. (Truly, the god man Jesus is the leader and highest example of human faith, Hebrews 12:2.)

Paul had come to understand that from the first marriage (Adam and Eve), marriage was designed to be a human echo of something to come — Christ and His marriage to the Church. Prior to Jesus coming to make the Father known (John 1:18), Paul and his fellow believing Jews had missed that understanding of marriage.

Now that our group was tracking with the Spirit through Paul, realizing that marriage is to be an echo of the union between Christ and the Church, it became very clear how to define a Biblical marriage before God. Only the union of Christ and the Church defines marriage for the believer living according to the Spirit. Biblical marriage is not, nor will it ever be, defined by a culture.

The relationship of Jesus to His bride is monogamous (2 Corinthians 11:2), an inseparable union (Ephesians 5:31-32) and not same sex, Ephesians 5:25-27. The union of Christ and the Church *is not* subject to the definition of any cultural idea, custom or social behavior. Why, because cultural norms apart from God are self-shining, and they work to kill faith in Jesus. That is what was happening in the Church at Corinth (1 Corinthians 3:1, 5:2), and the same is thriving in America's churches today.

In the day in which you live, you may need to read this chapter again.

CHAPTER SEVEN: DOES THE BELIEVER NEED A MARRIAGE LICENSE TO BE MARRIED?

Yes, unless the government does something to oppose God in requiring the believer to have a marriage license. If the government were to do things such as requiring all married couples to get the majority of their physical and financial needs met through

their parents, or be polygamous, or include same sex partners or 'try sex before getting married to ensure compatibility,' as I have heard one believer say — the believer would not be required to have a license to be married before God. We can obtain that understanding from the examples found in Acts 4:13-20, 5:17-21, and 5:26-31.

As long as our government requires a marriage license to be legally married, and they do not violate God's way in requiring it, then believers are to comply, Romans 13:1-3. As for the US Government, there are two decisions that historically represent why a marriage license is required of US citizens — to discourage polygamy and to promote families. Those are two biblically sound reasons to support the US government's current requirement of everyone to obtain a marriage license.

CHAPTER EIGHT: WHY IS SEXUAL INTERCOURSE NOT THE SAME THING AS BEING MARRIED?

If sexual intercourse was *synonymous* with being a family unit, God would be contradicting Himself to ever determine sex as immoral, John 4:16-18, 1 Corinthians 7:2. If marriage and sex is the same thing, how can sex be immoral at one point and moral at another? Sexual intercourse must not be the same thing as being married before God. The popular belief of culture apart from God's worldview is once again Biblically wrong.

Section Four

As the individuals in our group began to consider the previous question (Why is sexual intercourse not the same thing as being married?), we realized it was born from an incorrect view of the consummation of a marriage. The consummation, or reason and completion of a marriage covenant, is explained in Genesis 2:18-24.

CHAPTER NINE: WHAT DOES IT MEANS TO CONSUMMATE OR COMPLETE A MARRIAGE?

In the 1530's a religious organization added to the Biblical definition of marriage in an attempt to be relevant to the norms of their society (culture). Rooted in their attempt to oppose the sexual immorality of their day, we continue to have with us the wrong understanding of what it means to consummate a marriage. We have therefore lost the beautiful relevance of what it means to consummate a marriage. Anytime we allow the norms of our society (culture) to influence how we read, interpret or apply Scripture — we become irrelevant in the culture. We have under-estimated the present tense relevance of Jesus.

For nearly 500 years much of Christendom has incorrectly taught a marriage as complete (consummated) when the “spouses have performed between themselves in a human fashion... the procreation of offspring, to which marriage is ordered by its nature and by which the spouses become one flesh.”ⁱ

To believe that violates what we learned in the first point of our discussion. A new family unit is formed when a man stops depending on his parents to provide for him, and he attaches himself to the well being of his wife, Genesis 2:23-24. No child is present in that definition, nor needs to be. Certainly children do add to the family unit, but they are not required to be present for a family unit to be formed before God.

As we continued our group discussion, we also realized that this incorrect teaching about consummation, or the completing a family unit, was encouraged by the belief that all covenants are sealed with blood (in this case, the small amount of blood shed by a virgin during her first sexual intercourse with her husband). To seal a covenant with blood is not Biblically true of all covenants. The following covenants were not sealed with blood, God and Noah used a rainbow in Genesis 9:8-17, Joshua and the people used a big rock in Joshua 24:19-28, David and Jonathan used a robe in 1 Samuel 18:3-4; 20:8, 13-16, 41-42; 23:15-18.

Understanding that a new family unit is not formed with sexual intercourse, nor is a covenant necessarily sealed with blood, we turned our attention back to Genesis 2:18 and 20. The teaching found there about a “helper” would lead us to understand what the phrase “they shall become one flesh” means in Genesis 2:24. There is a liberating connection between these three verses, but it is not according to the nearly 500 year old tradition as most in our discussion had once assumed.

God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone,” Genesis 2:18. God knew Adam, an actual man, needed a “helper suitable” or corresponding to him, Genesis 2:18. As Adam looked upon God’s creation, he did not find such a counterpart, Genesis 2:20. For Adam to be in search of a counterpart or one corresponding to him meant he agreed with God — to be the only human was *not good*. Something in Adam's human experience was lacking.

Because of Adam’s solitude as the only human, his human experience (not his person) was lacking in some way(s). It was very important to take note that God's plan to make good the *not good* of Adam's human experience was to express Himself to Adam through another human, Genesis 2:21-22. Eve, an actual woman, is described as being a suitable counterpart or helper corresponding to Adam, Genesis 2:20. Therefore, she too, being a counterpart, is not designed to be the only human. If she were, her human

experience would be lacking in some way(s).

Our group needed to know more about the Hebrew phrase used in Genesis 2 for a “helper” or “helper suitable (corresponding) for.” It was a great help when we realized the same word for “helper” is used to describe God in Psalm 33:20, 70:5 and 115:9-11.

In Psalm 33, God does not help those who are self-confident, verses 6-17. He helps those whose faith results in a demonstration of His righteousness, verse 18-20. These believers are described as yielding to God while they wait for Him to provide help. They are nearing death or famine, and continue to make the choice to rejoice in the Lord, verse 21.

In Psalm 70:4-5, we read of the believer’s trust in God to provide help (quick relief) from their afflicting circumstances.

In Psalm 115:9-11, believers are told to trust in the Lord for ongoing protection, rather than the idols of this world system apart from God. He is the one who brings meaning to a life unlike the idols of men.

In those passages God is described as a helper corresponding to what a believer needs. It appears that “helper” in Genesis 2, and as used to describe God, is not a demeaning term. In each of these circumstances, there is a *process of help* or *completion* from God towards the believer. From these passages we realized *to be a suitable helper speaks to being part of a process, not necessarily an event*. Knowing that added insight for us into what God had said about Adam and Eve in Genesis 2:18-25.

In Genesis 2:24 we read, “... and they shall become one flesh.” “Shall become” can also be stated as “come to pass.” “Shall become” speaks of a process, just as does “suitable helper.” As God often completes or corresponds to what the believer lacks in any given circumstance of life, and brings to pass what they need, so it is for a married couple to become one flesh or to consummate their marriage, Genesis 2:24.

Through time in relationship before God it *came to pass* that God in Eve supplied what Adam lacked. Just as through time in relationship with God it *came to pass* that God in Adam supplied what Eve lacked. That is the process of *becoming one flesh*. That is what it means to complete or consummate a marriage, bringing the covenant of marriage to completion through the process of providing what the one corresponding to you lacks!

Consummating does not require at all the act of procreation or bearing offspring. It requires each spouse to live in such a way to bring about in the other healthy enduring relationships with Christ-like spirituality, but not according to our own idea or effort. “...for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure,” Philippians 2:13.ⁱⁱ

Section Five

By this point in our group conversation, there was much enthusiasm openly expressed for the Lord. It is an interesting experience when people begin to see the truth of God at work in personally relevant ways. A few more questions, and much enthusiasm for God were brought forward by the group.

CHAPTER TEN: WHY DID POLYGAMOUS MARRIAGES PERSIST BEFORE THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS?

In order to answer that, I pointed us back with emphasis to where we began: It is impossible to exaggerate the healing effect that a *Christian* worldview on marriage will have on a society.

Notice that the previous statement does not say anything about a *Judeo* Christian worldview. The distinction was not made for criticism, but to help the audience have necessary context for the answer to their question about the practice of polygamy before the Cross. The believing Jews, before the days of Christ Jesus, simply missed God's design for marriage. They didn't understand that human marriage was defined by the relationship between Christ and His bride, the Church, Ephesians 5:25-32.

As a group, it seemed necessary for us to review what we had learned from thinking through "Is marriage defined by culture?" As we reviewed, the Spirit led us to Ephesians 5:32 where we realized our answer concerning polygamy.

The word translated "mystery" (Ephesians 5:32) can be contextually applied to mean *formerly hidden or hard to understand truth now revealed by God for any person to know and understand*. That was a necessary amplification for us. ⁱⁱⁱ

Such understanding about marriage by Paul was a *mystery* (Ephesians 5:32) to the Jewish believers living before the first coming of Jesus to the earth. Like so many other truths introduced in the Old Testament writings, when God in Christ Jesus revealed the formerly hidden things, the new understanding elevated marriage to its proper role.

Yet, in our study we realized the Old Testament believers were without excuse. Following are some of the scriptures we worked through in pursuit of our answer concerning polygamy. Using only Old Testament Scripture, being deliberate to represent only what God had told them prior to the resurrection of Jesus, we realized the believing Jews had made the same mistake as many believers do today. They had accepted *the ideas, customs and social behavior of a society* as their definition of marriage before God.

We began by once again noting that a new family unit is formed when a man leaves his parents and joins to his wife, Genesis 2:23-24. That is a one to one ratio, not one to two or more. The law given through Moses identified adultery as sin, Exodus 20:14, Deuteronomy 5:18. Adultery is unfaithfulness to a spouse, which is a sin against God, Genesis 20:6, 39:6-9; 2 Samuel 12:13, Psalm 51:1-4. Furthermore, to even desire your neighbor's wife was a sin, Exodus 20:17, Deuteronomy 5:21.

The teaching found in Leviticus 18 and 20, as well as Deuteronomy 22:13-20 greatly esteems women, and Leviticus 26 speaks of blessings and penalties for disobedience to these instructions.

For example, the Israelite king was not to have multiple wives, Deuteronomy 17:17. A good bad example of ignoring God's plan for marriage is King Solomon. The consequences played out most apparently in the later years of his life, 1 Kings 11. Eventually, every person in the nation of Israel was affected negatively by Solomon's choice to sin!

One more question about polygamy was raised.

CHAPTER ELEVEN: WHY DID GOD GIVE INSTRUCTION TO MEN TO MARRY THEIR BROTHER'S WIFE, IF HE WANTS MARRIAGE TO BE MONOGAMOUS?

At this point in our discussion some quickly recognized that question was loaded with a big assumption. The question assumes the brother of the deceased brother is already married. We went back to our study of Scripture in search of the answer for the contextual instruction from God.

In Deuteronomy 25:5-10 we found it to be strongly encouraged for brothers who share the same estate to marry the wife of their deceased brother. That was done to keep family lines and inheritances intact, as well as to care for the widow of your brother, Numbers 27:4-11, Deuteronomy 25:5-10. However, the surviving brother did not have to marry the wife of his deceased brother, Deuteronomy 25:7-10.

During our group discussion, it was also noted that it was against God's instruction for anyone to have sexual relations with his brother's wife, Leviticus 18:16, 20:21. Therefore, if a surviving brother chose to marry the wife of his deceased brother, the surviving brother had to be himself unmarried. An example of that is found in Genesis 38:6-11. That same truth also plays out as seen in the marriage of Ruth and Boaz, when the nearest *unmarried* relative, Boaz, marries Ruth.

It was also noted that Matthew 22:25, Mark 12:19 and Luke 20:28 each address the same scenario of *unmarried* brothers assuming the responsibility for the wife of their deceased brother.

CLOSING CELEBRATION

As our 4 day group discussion came to a close, it was noted that human marriage *will stop* at the end of the Millennial Reign, because heaven is not like earth, Matthew 22:23-33. Realizing that brought a moment of hesitation to our enthusiastic discoveries. We had become so excited about God's plan for marriage between one man and one woman, that we almost failed to praise the Father for the ultimate Wedding Ceremony and Feast.

We turned to Revelation 19:7-9. There we realized new significance in the Lamb, Jesus Christ, the Bridegroom, entering into a public display of marriage with the Church, the bride, Ephesians 5:25-32. We held the same enthusiasm for the bride who is dressed in fine bright linen, Revelation 19:8.

It was at this point that we ended our week-long discussion. Equally encouraging to me was what God did next. It was not as if we should get any credit for it, for without knowing our conversation would lead us to the Wedding Ceremony and Feast of Jesus, our group now celebrated a meal that had been planned for us several days ago. As those who hold within us the evidence of Jesus, it was a unique fragrance of our worship to God, Revelation 19:10.

APPENDIX: THE RELEVANCE OF BIBLICAL TRUTH AMONG TWO WORLDVIEWS

One of the preceding topics 'A family unit is not same sex' was later discussed openly with a group of about thirty college students. I chose to use a recent program broadcasted over National Public Radio as the place to start our conversation. My opening point was to demonstrate the relevance of Biblical truth when confronted by the norms of a society apart from God.

The man promoting his book said, "Adam and Eve at no point get linked together linguistically (in the King James Bible)." ^{iv}

It was a cold December afternoon, and I was driving to town with both hands on the wheel. I had just heard the preceding statement over the radio. My grip became very tight, much like it did when I was putting tin on the barn roof, and the man standing on the ground told me Jesus is not God and the Spirit of God is not a real person. There are reasons God doesn't give men such as me super powers.

In other words, the man on the radio had just said the *form, meaning and context* (the linguistics) of the language of the Bible never connects Adam with Eve. When I processed what he had said, my mind started down the following path. But, before I let you in on my thoughts, let's give the author speaking on the radio the benefit of the doubt. Let's choose to believe he just didn't read far enough into the Biblical text, nor understand that Biblical truth is spiritually understood, 1 Corinthians 2:14. Although, he did present his book as if he had researched all of the Bible in search for how its language continues to affect our own.

In Genesis 2:7 mankind is spoken of as a human being. Phonetically we know the Hebrew word as "aw-dawm." However, by the time we get to the end of chapter 2 of Genesis we read in the Hebrew of a female person, spoken phonetically as "ishshah," Genesis 2:23.

As we continue reading the same verse in Hebrew, the text phonetically identifies a male person as "ish," Genesis 2:23. The male person said the female person is to be called "ishshah," because she was taken out of him. At that point humanity consisted of two distinct people in the Hebrew language.

In Genesis 3:20 the human being "aw-dawm" names his female person, his wife, "Eve." In Genesis 4:1 the human being "aw-dawm" has sexual relations with his wife, Eve, and she more than *linguistically* became pregnant!

How relevant is that truth? You decide as you listen to the caller's response to the author's comment about Adam and Eve not being connected contextually in the Scriptures. "That will be disappointing to the people who want to make some remark about Adam and Steve not being in the Bible. There is no more basis (in the Scriptures) for Adam and Eve than there is for that (Adam and Steve)," caller (Sarah from Columbia, SC), (parenthesis mine).

My point in this appendix was to demonstrate the relevance of Biblical truth when confronted by the norms of a society apart from God. If it weren't for Biblical truth, quickened by the Holy Spirit (John 14:16-17, 25-26), any of us could have responded like the caller. Without the knowledge of sound truth, coupled with humility before God, and the quickening of the Holy Spirit, the norms of a culture gone morally berserk creep in to become our own.

APPENDIX: THERE IS NEITHER A MALE OR FEMALE BINARY IN THE NATURE OF GOD

As the over-emphasis about sexuality increases, I have become aware of a view of sexuality published in 2019 that has gained support in Christian thought and literature. That view being that because God expresses His nature through us, and He is not male or female, some Bible teachers conclude they have a strong case for same sex relationships.^v According to that reasoning perhaps humans can also choose to be omnipresent and omniscient among other things, both also being attributes of God's nature. All three ideas are wildly unreasonable, illogical and inappropriate.

Using Romans 1:18-32 recent Bible teachers conclude the *unnatural* sexual function condemned in Romans 1:26 to be only a reference to the violent sexual acts and excess of the Roman emperors in Paul's day. Truly these leaders were excessive and violent. I, too, have read history on the sexual behavior of these men and women. They were indeed cruel in any way they chose, including acts of sex. In fact, I have refused to finish two history books because of the detailed descriptions of these acts. They were more barbaric than I wanted in my mind.

Today, these same Bible teachers go on to conclude the *unnatural* order of women in Romans 1:26 means nothing more than to condemn the deliberate demeaning of someone through sex. If that is the only condemnation, then what do we do with the explanation of the condemnation by Paul in the subsequent verse Romans 1:27? In this verse Paul describes *men abandoning the natural function of a woman and burning in their desire for other men as the reason for they receive the due penalty of their error in their persons*. Furthermore, if Paul is only concerned about demeaning someone through sexual acts, he has noted an example among them – *men being with men rather than men being with women*, Romans 1:27.

Even while following the logic of these Bible teachers to give *unnatural* freedom to same sex relationships, Romans 1:27 still opposes them. Romans 1:27 is included among the evidence of the *ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth by unrighteousness*, Romans 1:18-32.

Furthermore, to conclude this argument about God being neither male or female as a basis for same sex relationships is to place sex in the category of preference, rather than included with marriage as prophetically described in Genesis 2:23-24. Preference does not allow the believer to abandon their spouse, just as it does not allow the believer to abandon the natural order of a man for a woman, Romans 1:26-27.

Rather I have come to believe Romans 1:18-32 describe what was happening in first-century Rome among the Roman emperors and people because they had a wrong view of God, Romans 1:18-23. While having a wrong view of God it is hard to recognize you have a lie in your hand, Isaiah 44:9-20. My experience as a counselor and shepherd of people tells me this way of error and rebellion remains in play today.

FOOTNOTES

ⁱ Code of Canon Law, Title VII, Canon 1061.

ⁱⁱ For the unmarried believer, please do not become overly concerned with the marriage application of how God made the “not good” of Adam and Eve's human experience good. Marriage is not required for your human experience to be good. Please remember that God understood it was not good for Adam to be the only human, or for Eve to be the only human. God made humans to be social creatures, and in that our human experience is to be good. All friendship reaches its highest good through accountability to promote in one another healthy enduring relationships with Christ-like spirituality, Proverbs 17:17, 18:24.

The believer should never enter into a sexual relationship with someone unless such is an expression of God's plan within marriage, where the two becoming one flesh goes far beyond sexuality to provide what the other lacks. It does matter what the believer does with their body. Both the body and the spirit of the believer are in covenant with God, 1 Corinthians 6:15-17, 1 Timothy 3:14-16.

ⁱⁱⁱ We came to that conclusion while reviewing how Paul used the word mystery in additional passages such as Romans 11:25; 16:25, 1 Corinthians 2:7; 4:1; 13:2; 14:2; 15:51, Ephesians 1:9; 3:3; 6:19, Colossians 1:26-27; 2:2; 4:3, 2 Thessalonians 2:7 and 1 Timothy 3:9, 16. Without exception, every time Paul used the word it meant the same thing, formerly hidden or hard to understand truth now revealed by God.

^{iv} David Crystal, from a radio broadcast in December 2010, Talk of a Nation, <http://www.npr.org/2010/12/22/132262167/thank-the-king-james-bible-for-favorite-phrases>

^v Sylvia C Keesmaat and Brian J Walsh, *Romans Disarmed*, © 2019, chapter nine: Imperial Sexuality and Covenantal Faithfulness, Published by Brazos Press, page 343.

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