

## Biblical Pillars for a Family Foundation

### Pillar Four: Marriage - Unity at the Top, Part 1

#### I. Introduction – Why is unity so important?

*As marriage goes, so goes the family. As family goes, so goes society. Lack of marital unity is the cause for the sad state of marriages and broken families today. Kids look for unity and grieve over its absence. Movies and plays and books about romance are fundamentally about the pursuit of unity.*

##### A. Opposites of Unity

1. **Distance** – *the couple has learned to live without interdependence they sought when they married due to disappointment and lack of trust... they live separate lives in one house.*
2. **Unresolved Conflict** – *Each partner feels misunderstood, unfairly judged, undervalued and defensive. Any discussion outside of the weather can be reason to fear another conflict.*
3. **Selfishness** – *In his classic book on marriage, **Marriage Builder**, Christian psychologist Larry Crabb says that although weddings are all about what each person promises to do to bless the other person until death parts them, most marriages end up like two tics and no dog.*

##### B. Stories of Unity

- O'Henry's story, *The Gift of the Magi*
- Robertson McQuilkin's wife Muriel with Alzheimer's
- Chris Spielman's wife with cancer (Shaved head, sat out from NFL, etc.)

#### II. Biblical basis for unity

##### A. Genesis 1:26-28

###### 1. **Pinnacle of creation**

*The last act of his last day of creation. Changes His adjective from "good" to "very good." Implies completion in God's mind. Even with the mounting evidence of "information theory" which suggests that biosystems are so complexly programmed that there must be a programmer, post-modernism argues that there is no overarching meaning to our being here. They say, "we make our meaning." Likewise, naturalism of the last 170 years argues that we're the result of random mutations. But God's identification of man and woman as His highest pinnacle of creation suggests that God's purpose for man is more distinct, more significant than for any of creation – the opposite of naturalism.*

###### 2. **Let "us" make man in "our" image**

*Not saying proof-positive of the Trinity. But with later evidence we have of the Trinity (especially in New Testament), this helps us see that even at the beginning, God was already communicating to us His nature as a God in perfect relationship within Himself. One God yet three persons. Just as that depicts unity, so does His design for mankind. "Our image" implies that we reflect Someone who is both plural and singular – a great picture of unity.*

###### 3. **Reflect His image with two genders**

*Verse 27 says "In His image, God created him; male and female created He them." This means that the first part – **created him** – and the second part – **created them** (male and female) – are in God's mind like equal sides of an equation. When God brought humankind into existence, it was as a pair, as a unit. It is **together** that we reflect His image. Though the male is created from dust and the woman from man, and though 1 Cor 11:7-10 shows us that in some specific way, the man reflects God uniquely and the woman reflects the man, this first biblical account of the sexes shows that in God's mind, a male and female combination together reflect something of what He is like. This, by the way, is one of the great travesties of divorce. Divorce suggests that we live for ourselves. Marriage suggests that we live in covenant relationship (Malachi 2:14) so that through the ages, in good times and bad, we will reflect to boys and girls and young men and young women what God is like and how we are like Him. (PS These two sexes are not interchangeable or optional.)*

4. **Fill the earth**

*Verse 28 tells us that God wants lots of kids – “be fruitful, multiply and fill the earth.” This is a picture of unity and a picture of man and woman being created to start and be part of a never-ending family. Try to think of a wedding or Thanksgiving or Christmas and imagine no drug or alcohol abuse, no harshness or cruelty, no bitter feelings from years of injuries and unforgiveness, no divorce creating division of family. Imagine shared responsibilities, shared time of stories and eating and play. That is a picture of what God is creating. Sadly, for many of us, when we think of family getting together for a holiday or wedding, we only think of the results of sin. Family gatherings for some become equivalent to discord, disunity, and disgust. That’s not what God was trying to create when He said to multiply and fill the earth. That’s why when we read this passage, we need to remove ourselves from thinking about how it is now and see what He had in mind. The unity of a family was His picture. We’ll see more of that applied to the marriage in particular in just a minute. By the way, this is the relational part of creation – we’ll see the other part in a minute.*

5. **Subdue the earth**

*Here we have the other half of the created purpose of mankind. Manage and oversee creation. Build homes and highways, create schools, study nature, harness energy, find ways to exchange goods and services, take care of the family, use the gifts that come naturally to you, teach each other, discover together, creatively care for all I have given you in such a way that whenever I stop by for a visit, I’ll be able to say – That’s great! Way to go! The combined effort of Lance using his talents and Kristen using hers would together – goodness knows we can’t subdue the earth alone – create a unity of purpose and achievement which would be useful, God-honoring, and enjoyable. Some cultures believe that work was a result of the Fall into sin. It is not. Fruitful work was part of what we were **built** for. As we’ll see in a minute, the frustrating, never-ending, toil of work was a result of the Fall. But this purposefulness and industry was to be a great place of unity as we admired the colorful contribution of each musician or weaver, teacher or engineer, rancher or farmer, mom, or dad. God’s plan of managing creation had in it remarkable joy. One reason was that it had built into the idea of unity something like a work project that many jump in on together; together we would subdue the earth and manage it as overseers.*

B. Genesis 2:18-25

While the previous passage (Gen. 1:26-28) is described by theologians as a **telescopic** view of the creation of mankind, this passage is often described as a **microscopic** view.

1. Alone

God gives a quick glimpse into Adam’s world before creating his other half. His aloneness was the **only thing** in creation that God called ‘not good.’ God doesn’t focus on the man’s inability to fulfill his purposes of filling the earth or subduing the earth. Instead, He says the man is alone. That is not how God wanted man – He wanted him in relationship with a life-partner. Since God creates the woman to be the man’s companion and to now enable him to fill and subdue the earth, the man will be her companion, too. As we’ll see in a few weeks, he is to be much more than that. Unity is implied in their need for each other.

2. Searches for someone who fits

But the man is alone and needing a companion. God brings along horses and dogs, elephants, and tigers. The man likes them all fine and names them as he greets them. But, as Adam might have said if he was from the southern part of the Shenandoah Valley, none of them “suits.” None of them fits the man... golden retriever and German shepherd included. No, the man needed someone who is more like him than those creatures but also preferably a little different from him, too. Strategically different. He needs someone who will fit just so, someone combined with whom he really can be like one person.

3. From his side, bone and flesh  
The monks of five hundred years ago observed that God did not take the woman from his foot, that he should trample on her, nor from his head, that she should dominate him, but from his side near his heart, that he would see her as an equal for whom he was to care. She was, in Adam's words, *bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh*. As 1 Cor. 12:26 would say later of the Body of Christ, "when one part hurts, the other parts hurt." Likewise in the marriage relationship. Unity is enhanced by remembering we are made of the same stuff.
4. He leaves and cleaves  
"Leave your father and mother." Although Adam had no earthly father and mother, he was to be the prototype of men who come after. All of us were to leave our first loyalty to our parents and establish a new first loyalty. We were to leave the home of our parents and establish a new home. We were to leave the unique ways of our parents and with our spouse, create new ways. This was a two-part recipe for unity: (a) leave everyone else in second place so our wife knows she has no rivals for our affection or attention; (b) draw so closely to her in heart that it could be said we "cleaved to her" – i.e., become one with her. It's hardly possible to imagine a better picture of unity – *unless it's the next*.
5. They become one flesh and are naked and unashamed  
Here the Holy Spirit who inspired this passage paints for us the last picture we are to see of mankind **before our Fall into sin**. Two people, physically and emotionally naked with each other – nothing to hide. They have no shame, and they make love. Two bodies become joined into one – inseparable. It doesn't get more unified than that.

#### C. Summary

That's His design. That's God's best. That's God's intent for the human family. We are all related to one common father and mother and so are part of each other... we are more alike than different, regardless of nationality or race.

We were designed to manage this world in a unified effort. And the foundation of all of it was to be that each man and woman who paired off in marriage was to be covenanted together without shame in physical, emotional, indissoluble union. Unity of purpose, unity of relationship. In that, we would together reflect the image of God.

People were to be able to look at marriages and say, "*My how she loves him. Or my, how deeply he cares for her.*" They would look at families and say, "*Look at how each one contributes and how they function in order and submission with joy. Those boys are fast becoming young men, and what fine young women those girls are becoming.*"

The unity of marriage and unity of the family was to be a window into what God is like.

#### Destruction of Unity

- A. Genesis 3 – The Fall from unity with God and with each other (Genesis 3:1-6)  
We see many things occur in the fall. They are all aspects of the "death" that God said would occur if the man ate the fruit and which Satan said would not occur. One writer has said that the fall was a fall from "shalom" (wholeness, often called "peace"). It was a disruption of the 'peace' that God designed in our relationship with Him, with each other, with nature and within ourselves. Another phrase for that fracture of shalom and the need for reconciliation is "loss of unity." The Fall was as much as anything a **disruption of the unity** for which we have been designed. In our country in this day, no place feels disruption more than our marriages. It is why the apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians 5 tells us, "God has reconciled us to Himself through Christ and given to each one of us a ministry of reconciliation." Reconciliation is what is needed when "shalom" or "peace" or "unity" is broken.

- B. Genesis 3:7-10 – Their eyes were opened... and they covered themselves  
When spiritual death fell on the man, his eyes and the eyes of his wife were opened to the fact that their nakedness now instantly brought shame. Though the nakedness was not the problem – it was rather what was in the man – it was the nakedness that he felt he could do something about. They couldn't cover the real problem but maybe if they appeared on the outside, well, "covered up," then maybe, just maybe, this terrible feeling tearing them from the inside would go away.
- C. Genesis 3:10-12 – The man shifts blame to the woman (and God)
- D. Genesis 3:16-19 – The curses
1. The woman (3:16)
    - a. Children – pain increases in bearing your children
    - b. Husband – Susan T. Foh argues that "desire" (*teshuqah*) here is similar to the same word in Genesis 4:7 (God speaking to Cain = "sin's desire is for you"), and here refers to a wife's desire to "control" her husband. Scholars debate this interpretation, but it fits the warning that follows: he'll "rule" her. (*Masal* does not refer to his 'position' but to his manner of rule – i.e., harshly or with dominance.)
  2. The man (3:17-19)  
His work will be cursed (3x), yet through it will provide the needs of the family (3x).
- E. Net results: Driven from God's presence and the experience of real life (3:24)

### Methods for Pursuing Unity in Marriage

- A. Principle from John Piper's poem to his son at his wedding: *Love Her More and Love Her Less*
- One – the way to know how to have a good marriage does not really begin with marriage passages. It really begins with passages about your spiritual life. The relationship you enjoy or do not enjoy in marriage will more than anything reflect that relationship with Christ.
  - Two – in our effort to get married or to make a good marriage, let's not make marriage an idol. Let's keep the Lord in His proper place (FIRST) in our lives and keep the idea of a marriage that can satisfy and bless one another in its proper place (SECOND).
- B. Know, Follow Christ –
1. **John 15:1-17** – Abide in Him (*spend intentional time with Him and His Word, pray without ceasing, get to know Him as a friend and as Lord*) and thereby produce fruit (Gal. 5:16). This will be show itself by how you love one another and how you obey Him.
  2. **Matthew 11:28-30** – Realize that He has a supernatural ability to care for you when you are weary and heavy-laden; don't forget that
  3. **Mark 9:35** – The first in His kingdom will be the servant of all
  4. **Galatians 5:16-23** – Walk in the Spirit and you'll not fulfill the desires of the flesh (See also **Romans 8:6-8**).
- C. All relationships for Christians are to be marked by several key principles; Marriages are the **primary Christian relationship** and so these are even more important there.
1. Romans 12:10 – Prefer each other
  2. Philippians 2:3– Consider the other as more important
  3. Ephesians 4:23-27– Let your mind be renewed, put on your new self, lay aside falsehood, speak truth, do not sin in your anger.
- D. Understand **your role**  
This is one of the most significant things we can do to help unity take place. (Pillar 5&6)

### III. Homework

Do the questionnaire on the next page and read the poem on the page following.

**Homework One: Marriage Questionnaire**  
**In This Together: Unity at the Top**

If you are married, please rate yourselves on each of the following questions so you will have a better understanding of where your marriage is. If we were built for individuality and unity (see Gen 1:26-28, 2:18, 1 Corinthians 12), then marriage is the place where that individuality and unity can best be experienced. Our grasp of God’s design and means for marriage are essential to success in this most personal of all human relationships.

Depending upon the way the question is worded, the rating scale is as follows:

<b>1=No</b>	<b>2= Seldom</b>	<b>3= Sometimes</b>	<b>4=Often</b>	<b>5= Regularly</b>
<b>1=No</b>	<b>2=Don't Understand</b>	<b>3=1 Yes, 1 No</b>	<b>4=Mostly</b>	<b>5=Completely</b>

1. We are both confident that God’s desire for us in our marriage is to experience a kind of interdependence where neither is controlled, neither is ignored and both are known and appreciated by the other. We believe this is still possible. \_\_\_\_\_
2. We have a strong sense that God reflects Himself in our marriage. \_\_\_\_\_
3. I know that my spouse and I “left” our father and mother and that neither one’s extended family exercises an influence that pulls us apart from each other. \_\_\_\_\_
4. My spouse cleaves to me – connects more closely to me than to anything else than God. \_\_\_\_\_
5. My spouse agrees that I cleave to them more than to any other relationship or purpose. \_\_\_\_\_
6. We regularly enjoy being together in the most intimate setting possible (sex). \_\_\_\_\_
7. We have dealt with any unfinished business from our past that can affect that close connection through trusting God, forgiving and giving ourselves away. \_\_\_\_\_
7. Our marriage is in Christ. We share a relationship with Him and with each other and are therefore equally yoked (2 Corinthians 6:15). \_\_\_\_\_
8. The husband in this marriage understands and has visibly committed himself to biblical priorities of providing, protecting, leading, understanding, honoring. \_\_\_\_\_
9. The wife in this marriage understands and has visibly committed herself to biblical priorities of honoring, submitting, loving her husband. \_\_\_\_\_
10. Honesty is practiced in our relationship. \_\_\_\_\_
11. We each understand that the stresses of life and of raising a family can easily wear on us and make it easier to live in our flesh, resulting in the deeds of the flesh mentioned in Galatians 5:19-21 (anger, immorality, jealousy, division, etc.). \_\_\_\_\_
12. We each consistently approach the Lord in petition for our need for His Spirit to empower us to live the kind of life together He intends. This shows in our openness to Him, to His Word and to the input/feedback of our spouse. \_\_\_\_\_
13. Our finances are something we intentionally work on together to have God honored in the way we live and give, spend, and save. \_\_\_\_\_
14. Communication and conflict resolution are things we are both open to working on as the Lord gives us opportunity. \_\_\_\_\_
15. I am grateful for my spouse. \_\_\_\_\_
16. I commit to attempt to bless my spouse and not live for myself, as the Lord works in me. \_\_\_\_\_

**TOTAL** \_\_\_\_\_

**66-80** = Way to go – Please help FBC as we minister to families (Contact *Family Life Ministry* Dept.)  
**51-65** = You have made some key commitments. Be on the lookout for one marital area to work on.  
**40-50** = Need some real focus on a couple of areas. It would be good to isolate those and begin work.  
**39 and below** = You are hurting. Feel free to contact the Counseling Department and see about courses or counseling with which we might be able to help.

**Homework 2: Love Her More and Love Her Less**

© John Piper (1998) (For his son on the eve of his wedding)

The God whom we have loved  
And in whom we have lived  
And who has been our rock these twenty-two good years with you  
Now bids us with sweet tears to let you go.

A man shall leave his father and his mother,  
Cleave henceforth unto his wife and be one unashamed flesh and free.  
This is the Word of God today  
And we are happy to obey.  
For God has given you a bride  
Who answers every prayer we've cried,  
For over twenty years --  
Our claim for you before we knew her name.

If you now aim your wife to bless,  
Then love her more and love her less.

If in the coming years by some strange providence of God -  
You come to have the riches of this age and painless stride  
Across the stage beside your wife, **be sure** in health,  
To love her, love her, more than **wealth**.

And if your life is woven in a hundred friendships  
And you spin a festal fabric out of all your sweet affections, great and small,  
Be sure no matter how it rends,  
To love her, love her, **more than friends**.

And if there comes a point, when you are tired and pity whispers,  
"Come be free, embrace comfort here with me!"  
Know this: your wife surpasses these -  
So, love her, **love her, more than ease**.

And when your marriage bed is pure and there is not the slightest lure  
Of lust for any but your wife, and all is ecstasy and life,  
A secret all of this protects:  
Go love **her, love her, more than sex**.

And if your own should someday be the craft that critics all agree  
Is worthy of great esteem and sales exceed your wildest dream,  
Beware the dangers of a name  
And love her; **love her, more than fame**.

And if to your surprise, not mine, God calls you by some strange design  
To risk your life to some great cause  
Let neither fear nor love give pause - and when you face the gate of death  
Then love her, **love her, more than breath**.

Yes, love her, love her more than life.  
Oh, love the woman called your wife.  
Go love her as your earthly best.  
But, beyond this, venture not.  
Lest your love becomes a fool's façade,  
Be sure to love **her less than God**.  
It is not wise nor kind to call an idol by sweet names  
And fall as in humility before a likeness of your God.  
Adore above your best beloved on earth -  
The God alone who gives her worth.

And she will know in second place  
That your great love is also grace-  
And that your high affections now are flowing freely from a vow  
Beneath these promises.

First made to you by God nor will they fade  
For being rooted by the stream of heaven's joy  
Which you esteem & cherish more than breath and life  
That you may give it to your wife.

The greatest gift you give your wife  
Is loving God above your wife.  
And thus, I bid you now to bless,  
Go love her more and love her less.