

# Appraising Adam and Eve as Biblical Standard of Submission in Contemporary Marriage

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## Abstract

This paper is an x-ray of the marital relationship between Adam and Eve for the purpose of enhancing submission among contemporary couples as well as guiding intending persons on the nature of an ideal Christian marriage. It reveals that the concept of marriage existed in the loving heart of God before man was ever created. Moreover, it was initiated by Him after the creation. Adam and Eve perfected the qualities required for the best of marriage in three dimensions: physical, mental, and spiritual. Though, they erred at the fall, it did not change their sense of commitment to each other. It was rather reinforced when they were forgiven because of their remorse and repentance. Therefore, although contemporary couples and those intending to marry are beset with numerous challenges, there is hope and solution for them if only they are willing to inculcate the lessons of cohesion at every level of marriage as drawn from the union of the first man and woman in faith, love, humility, obedience, and worship of God.

## Keywords

Submission ordinarily means the process by which an individual yields or surrenders him or herself to the power or will of another person. It can also be seen as a way of abiding by someone's opinion. It is the ability to be subject to a condition or treatment. Submission can be regarded as a state of being humble or compliant (Merriam Webster).

Marriage is viewed in this paper from its natural and biblical point of view as a legal contract of union between a male and female for life. It is God's provision of a strong foundation for the family through the setting up of a "lifetime commitment and relationship between a man and woman" (NIV Quest Study Bible, 2005:5). Similarly, it "is a divine ordinance... establishing the home as the basic unit of the social order" (Merrill F. Unger, 1981:14). Thus, it has no room for same sex marriage in whatever way construed. It also nullifies the condition of co-habitation.

Biblical implies that the Bible constitutes the background on which this discussion is being treated with regards to Adam and Eve as a standard of submission in contemporary marriage. It is centered mainly on the Genesis account of creation. References are drawn where necessary from other areas of the Bible.

## 1. Introduction

The idea of marriage did not originate from man. It is God's plan for the suitable companionship between a man and woman united by vow to constitute a home. Moreover, by the nature of God, His word, plan, and purpose do not change nor diminish in value. Consequently, His design and intention of marriage remain unbroken irrespective of time. But in contrast to the truth of this idea contemporary marriage is being confronted by series of problems ranging from issues over which couples have control in one way or the other to prevent, solve and manage as the case may be, such as infidelity, insubordination, lack of communication, uncooperative attitude, and absence of mutual understanding, respect as well as love.

Nevertheless, they also face challenges arising from terminal diseases, poverty, unemployment, training, and care for the children and so on. However, the ability for a couple to overcome or control any problem and derive maximum benefits from their relationship depends strongly on submission. In view of the above, this paper intends to treat the subject of submission in marriage from a biblical perspective. It contains the basis and truth of marriage as experienced by the first couple, Adam and Eve in Genesis 2:7, 18-25.

Thus, materials were assessed based on the nexus of their theological, socio-historical, ethical, and anthropological analyses. To this end, they are presented within the ambit of a theoretical framework as follows.

## 2. Origin of God's Idea of Marriage – Gen. 1:24, 25, 26-31; 5:2

God's plan of marriage was not an afterthought following the creation of Adam as a singular individual before the woman was created. From the beginning before both of them were formed, God had and expressed the desire to make entire human race. This is what is contained in the usage of the term Adam in Genesis 1:26-31. It was not intended to convey a personal name in this part of the Scriptures. Its Hebrew connotation may literally or grammatically be used in the personal format but in gender expression, it is not here specific. Therefore, its meaning is clearly expressive of a man and woman taken together (Bruce T. Dahlberg 2003:92). This is further communicated and understood in Genesis 1:27 and 5:2, "So God created mankind (man) in his own image; in his own image God created them; he created them male and female" (ISV 2018). "Male and female he created them, and he blessed them and named them Man when they were created" (ESV 1993; Dahlberg).

In addition to the textual inquiry of this idea, the majesty of God as the all knowing, all powerful, and all present cannot justify anyone's thought of Him as not being aware of what He wants to do before embarking on it. Moreover, the above argument of the God's preconceived idea to create from the onset male and female (Adam) and of course human race as a whole has intrinsic plan to institute marriage for procreation. This is further implied in the blessing to be fruitful and multiply (Gen. 1:28). For how were they to be fruitful if there was no intimacy? And how were they to relate intimately without marriage? God hates immorality be it fornication, adultery or something else right from the beginning (Gal. 5:19-21, Eph. 5:5 1 Thes. 4:3).

Consequently, Women's Evangelical Commentary on the Old Testament substantiates the view that marriage was already in the plan of God for humanity before the creation of Adam. Thus, it stresses that the use of the phrase, "according to their kinds" in verses 24 and 25 of Genesis 1, conveys "one of the greatest pictures of the marriage relationship..." ("Genesis" 2011:12). Besides, Warren W. Wiersbe (2007:21) inferred from Genesis 1:27 in corroboration of the same opinion that marriage was not subject to a condition as it is being expressed that because Adam was helpless hence God created the woman as a helpmeet for him, notes that "Marriage was born in the loving heart of God for the blessing and benefit of mankind." Thus, the woman was not in any way created less than the man either in time or purpose.

### **3. God as the Builder of Marriage – Psm. 127:1; Gen. 1:26-3; 2:7, 18-25**

The practice of marriage is an act that requires a set of skills to build and maintain throughout life. Like a good, comfortable, solid, and admirable building, it must begin with the best architectural design. Then an engineer who determines the strength of the soil and materials to be used; a surveyor that will find out about the cost and next with the construction another engineer in the line of order who will involve other experts at every point in its proper process of building. As it is required to be erected up to the finishing stage, its maintenance no matter the solidity, similar procedure in terms of expertise must still be adhered to if the original aesthetic, strength, and general value of the building can be retained. Otherwise, it will gradually or suddenly depreciate, fade, and crash depending on the force exerted on it. This is a somewhat illustration of the nature of marriage.

Thus, marriage needs adequate preparation. As we have seen expressed in the previous sessions, God is the Architect, Engineer and Builder (Psm. 127:1). The husband and wife play the role of skillful laborers, workers or artisans for the construction. They are also the owners. God on His part has done the design in creation. In addition, He puts in them all they need: intellectual ability, wisdom, knowledge, temperament, strength, skills, and so on, innate and learned required for building their relationship. In the same vein, He provides the forum which is the marriage itself (Gen. 1:26-3; 2:7, 18-25). Moreover, like a skill worker, they cannot effectively build without reference to God for continual guidance, grace, and power. This is the point at which faith, trust, prayer, studying of the Scriptures, godly counselling, and so on come into it from the onset and always. On the basis of this background, we proceed to examine the marriage between Adam and Eve as a biblical standard of submission for contemporary couples.

### **4. Adam and Eve as Biblical Standard of Submission in Contemporary Marriage - Gen. 2:7, 18-25**

Adam and Eve are less commonly referred to for anything good. The fall has overshadowed several of their qualities as if nothing good ever came from them. There are numerous lessons that can be learnt from their lives. As a couple they have a lot to share with the world. Thus, the following factors are drawn from them to build and improve on modern marriage in the contest of submission.

#### *4.1 A Couple Must See Themselves as Suitable Complement for each Other in Love (Gen. 2:18, 21-23, 25)*

Like in a building illustrated above, the concrete and general force that hold the structure of marriage together is first, the couple's love for God and second, their love for each other (Mar. 12:30-31). Consequently, love is the underlying basis of submission. It is the pivot on which every other thing in marriage revolves. This is the reason why every consideration or idea like the present is based on love. In the absence of it, nothing else really works but a mere futile effort bound to crash.

So, having been lovely attracted to each other, a couple must see themselves suitable, fit, united, and complementary as God has made them to be (v. 18). This is one of the steps of their being able to submit to each other. To this end, Ernest White (1965:23) interpreting Jesus' statement in Mark 10:6-8 declares that "...marriage is a one-flesh relationship." It is an act that grows out of a conscious awareness and understanding of who the other person is, needs, likes, and hates to avoid as well as to apply respectively where necessary that would tighten them together. It should not be one sided. Both the husband and wife have something to do for the other in this regard. It is mutual and not exploitative. But it is difficult for some spouses to do because of pride, lack of humility, and willingness to yield to God as well as submit to one another. Others do not because of ignorance and lack of ability to study their partner and to examine themselves, reflect and make adjustment to improve on their marriage. Besides, where true love and respect do not exist as already discussed and would be seen as follows, the process would be unfruitful. Also, the strength of oneness in marital submission is further

explained by Henry E. White Jr's (1961:15) assertion that,

Marriage is the divine interlocking of man and woman into a permanent union of one (Matt. 19:6). It is the two equal halves of God's creation, being fitted together into its natural state. God's intent was that man and woman be united in love, living together, working together, sharing experience and being to each other a natural complement.

Nevertheless, the idea of God taking a rib from the side of man to form the woman connotes the complementarities of the two from the workmanship of God (vv.21-22). Adam acknowledged this fact when he explained in admiration, "this at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh" (v. 23 ESV 1993). Spouses have it as a duty to allow their sense of complement work in them. Moreover, in support of this idea, Matthew Henry (1961:7) opined that, "She (the woman, Eve) was not made out of his (the man, Adam) head to rule over him, nor out of his feet to be trampled upon by him, but out of his side to be equal with him, under his arm to be protected, and near his heart to be beloved." In similar perspective, Warren W. Wiersbe (2007:21) referring to Paul's exposition: "the woman is the glory of man" (1 Cor. 11:7 NIV), explains that, "for if man is the head (1 Cor. 11:1-16, Eph. 5:22-23), then woman is the crown that honours the head."

Thus, the complementing of a couple keeps them together in one mutual submission without separation or division. This is further expanded, clarified, and summed up with the belief of Ray Ortlund (2016:30) that,

...in the one-flesh union of marriage, all the boundaries between a man and a woman fall away, and the married couple comes together completely, as long as they both shall live. In real terms, two selfishme's start learning to think like one unified us, building a new life together with one total everything: one story, one purpose, one reputation, one bed, one suffering, one subject, one family, and so forth. Marriage removes all barriers and replaces them with a comprehensive oneness. It is this all-encompassing unity that sets marriage apart as marriage, more profound than even the most intense friendship.

John H. Sailhamer (1994:8) reflecting on the loneliness of Adam, explains that God's intention for the creation of the woman was to serve as a suitable partner to the man. This was based on the fact that there was no one actually fit among the creatures to have served virtually in this regard to him in the natural and human sense of it. Thus, he needed someone to assist him specifically in caring for the garden as well as to support him generally. Eve occupies this position in him. However, beyond this idea, the main issue of Genesis 1:28 ("Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth") has more to do with the idea of child bearing. This view finds evidence in chapter 3:16 where God expresses that she would encounter pains in childbirth.

Following in the above order, Henri Blocher (1984:95) began a review of the creation of the woman by stating that,

What was missing in God's creation when his judgement fell: It is not good..." (Gen. 2:18)?  
What prevented him from feasting his eyes on his work and declaring it very good (Gen. 1:31)?  
The world was suffering from an absence: the absence of woman.

As a result, the purpose of the judgement was not against God as not knowing before time that the absence of the woman would create a void in or to the man. God sees and knows internally. Therefore, the purported judgement is intended by Him to introduce the importance of a woman in a man's life.

On the other hand, going by the latter condition of pains at childbirth to the woman, it should not be seen as merely an act of punishment. It is nowhere stated in the Scripture prior to the fall that childbirth would have been without pain, particularly at the command for them to be fruitful and multiply. Moreover, the consequence of sin is only on human beings. But animals also go through similar conditions at the point of delivering their babies. To this extent, the link between the fall and pains at birth for the woman (Gen. 3:1-16) is used at a secondary level by God to remind the woman, as a means of discipline for the fall, and to caution her against further act of disobedience. This is also true of the man when He says,

Because you have listened to what she said, and have eaten from the tree about which I commanded you, you must not eat from it, 'cursed is the ground because of you. You will eat from it through pain-filled labour for the rest of your life... You will eat food by the sweat of your brow until you're buried in the ground, because you were taken from it. You're made from dust and you'll return to dust (Gen. 3:17-19, ISV).

The evidence to this opinion is expressed in Genesis 2:15, "The Lord God took the man and placed him in the Garden of Eden in order to have him work it and guard it" (ISV). Thus, there can be no work without the exertion of energy which in turn produces sweat depending on the degree. Besides, the ground was already included in the command for him to work as to where he should labour. It is also true according to the Scripture as affirmed in the statement (Gen. 3:19) that man was formed from dust (Gen. 2:7). The only idea that is new in verse 19 as expressed above is the concept of being buried and to return back to dust where he was taken. Therefore, the notion of labour and sweat are not primarily in themselves as acts of punishment. Rather, they are conditions of production. But like the birth pain, God uses them as conditions to enforce discipline by serving to remind man of his fall and the need to be on guide. They also depict the end result of sin whether in the temporal

or eternal part of existence. This is also what the concept of death conveys. Death as a cessation of life symbolizes a separation from God as the consequent of sin.

#### *4.2 A Couple Must Believe and Express each Other's Worth and Personality in Love (v. 23)*

Choosing of a partner in marriage should not be based on a game of chance. Rather, it should come from a deliberate choice of what is known, seen, and accepted in a person. This is one of the forces of attraction that brings a suitor and maid together in marriage. It is the contents that make the person what he or she is inside and outside as well as what he or she can do. It constitutes the value of a spouse before the other. It has to do with a person's behaviour and character. Love is not the absence of weaknesses. Instead, it overcomes them by acts of kind correction and tolerance. It commends and encourages for what is good (1 Cor. 13:4-8a). Some couples do not look back on where they are coming in their relationship as a reflection on their good old days. Rather, they allow differences and weaknesses as well as their present circumstances to blur and stain their involvement and concentration on each other's good, growth, strength, and wellbeing.

As a way forward in marriage, couples should not forget their best times and work together to improve on themselves and for each other. For instance, sweet words of love, appreciation, a pet, and compliment are some of the important tools for this purpose. They provide assurance of confidence on each other. Moreover, personal hygiene, protection, and care for the body should not be overlooked. Cleanliness and neatness of the home are basic elements for this purpose as well. It is not about the expensiveness but of the practice. Moderate and nice dressing not enchantment but decency is good for both. It is also about what one is capable of doing for the other such as cooking, providing money, and materials needed for the home and for each other when the occasion arises, showing concern, praying together, and for one another, and so on. This should be worked on, recognized, and admired.

Furthermore, spouses should assist, encourage, and believe in themselves. It helps to cement their relationship for utmost benefit and strength of submission. Adam showed it in his exclaimed admiration for his wife, "This at last is the bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh" (v. 23 ESV). One can only imagine how Eve must have felt on hearing and seeing her husband in this mood. Reflecting on this, Wiersbe (21) referred to Martin Luther as saying that marriage is "a school for character." Thus, he opines that, "As people live together in holy matrimony, the experience either brings out the best in them or the worst in them." Submission is the instrument that helps couples to bring the best out of themselves. It thrives with the ingredients of the "exercise of faith, hope and love and to mature in sacrifice and service to one another for God's glory" (Wiersbe). Merrill F. Unger (1981:15) also analysis Adam's admiration with the view that it was "not merely in physical feelings (flesh) but in the higher realm of the intellectual and spiritual (bones)."

Again, let us not forget that personality and worth of an individual irrespective of love do not mean that he or she is perfect and cannot err or offend. As long as we remain humans, who we are, there shall be no marriage without wrongs. For this reason, misunderstandings, hurts, tempers, and all manner of wrongs are bound to occur. Moreover, there is nothing God cannot change and no situation he cannot handle. Therefore, couples should learn to take their cases to Him and sought them out in the spirit of faithfulness, trust, humility, obedience, and forgiveness (Henry E. White, 1961:33, 35). This will help them to regain their worth and commitment to each other thereby intensifying their sense of submission. Adam and Eve demonstrated this ability. Thus, they knew and accepted their weaknesses. But they did not leave it at that. Instead, they repented of their sin leading to the fall and worked with and on themselves to overcome and grow beyond their shortcomings.

D. Perry Ginn and Eugene Chamberlain (1963:11) also alluded to the idea of repentance on the part of Adam and Eve. They asserted that the reason God called them, "Where are you" (Gen. 3:9) was not because He was ignorant of their whereabouts. But, by the call, He presents to them "an opportunity to repent and confess their sin." Nevertheless, they (Ginn and Eugene) faulted them for using the occasion to be shifting blame.

One agrees with them in faulting their complaints. Yet, there is something meaningful in their action that relates to repentance and confession. They did not deny their sin, though they attempted to shift the blame. Moreover, they hid themselves in expression of remorse, grief of conscience and self-condemnation. Hence, they withdrew from God in fear of Him. They did not attempt to force their way on Him, pretending nothing has happened as some people currently do. So, God recognized their fear, regret, and chastisement. He forgave, brought them back to union with Him and one another as well as clothed them (Gen. 3:1-13, 21).

E. Ray Clendenen (2003:26) led credence to God's forgiveness of Adam and Eve in his statement that, they "... were also the first to learn that God had a plan of redemption by which one of their descendants would remove evil from the world (Gen. 3:15)." This was based on a disclosure made to them by God. He would not have done this without a purpose for them in it. This is seen as a primordial presentation of the Gospel. Some of the early Church fathers such as Justin Martyr (160 AD) and Irenaeus (180 AD) described it as Protoevangelium while Derek Kidner, an Old Testament scholar sees it as Protevangelium (Protevangelium, Wikipedia, 2018). In view of this witnessing (Gen. 3:15) and the resultant clothing of the couple (Gen. 3:21), it is proper to conclude that they must have met with God's aim of the revelation of His plan of redemption which is for them to believe

and be redeemed as their descendant would be. Therefore, as Adam and Eve were the first to sin, they were also the first to be saved via faith in Christ.

This view is further supported by Paul's assertion that there are those who exercised faith in the distant time before Christ's physical appearance on earth (Heb. 11). Also that without faith it is impossible to please God (Heb. 11:6). In the context of his chronological assessment of those who acted based on faith, Paul projects his account backward up to Abel (Heb. 11:4), and went beyond him to the time of creation. This implies that faith had been in operation before and after Adam and Eve. Therefore, the concept of their learning or knowing of God's plan of salvation also afforded them with the privilege to benefit from it. Consequently, Abel learnt from them and believed as they were. Thus, the Gospel and salvation have been in operation right from the time of creation. The first ever or primordial couple avail themselves of it and increase in its benefits all through their lives.

#### *4.3 A Couple Must Reflect their Value in the Name they Call each Other in Love (v. 23)*

Every couple has something they call each other. It could be by their personal names or something else they have chosen to identify themselves in the spirit of marriage and godliness. They have the divine mandate to do so (Gen. 2:19). Thus, names are important instruments to man. They are means of identification. They convey purpose, value, and essence. A name is a reflection of character, nature or attribute whether good or bad. So it is used to show the significance one attaches to a thing or person or the reputation one has made for him or herself.

With the divine authority given to man by God, Adam as the primordial man and husband was the first to exercise the right of naming. Thus, he gave names to the creatures (Gen. 2:19). In the same vein, as the first husband, he initiated the process by which couples give and call themselves by some special names, "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh, she shall be called woman..." (Gen. 2:23 RSV). While "woman" was a general name for his wife, he gave two special names peculiar only to themselves, which they alone had the right and privilege to call each other as "bone of my bones," and "flesh of my flesh." They are explicitly deep in meaning and value. They depict the extent of the absorption (submission) that prevailed between Adam and Eve his wife. It was a personification of love in the highest unquantifiable manner ever known. It is unparalleled in the history of man and it shall remain so.

Spouses at all times should emulate them and faithfully guide it. For a deeper understanding of this as used by Adam to qualify his wife, let us consider some Hebrew implications of the terms. Bone as used in Hebrew transliteration "atsam" or "etsem" refers to the essence, substance internally and externally, the whole or totality of a person or self ("Strong-Lite: H6105, H6106", 2018). According to Strong's definition, by extension, it is the body but also figuratively referring to the core element or substance of a thing. In this case, a person's replica, same as self, in strength, exactness, and in every way without difference. In the same vein, flesh in Hebrew is "basar." Among others, the fundamental aspects of it is that, it means the flesh of animals or humans, again, the whole body itself, as well as one or those with whom a person shares a common origin ("Strong-Lite: H1320, H1319", 2018).

From the above, it is clear indeed that based on Adam's understanding and acceptance of his wife, by description, name or otherwise, he never in anyway made a differentiation, dichotomy or separation between both of them. He made it clear and conveys same to her in words and songs ("Gen. 2:21-25, Humanity," CSB). It was not hidden within them. By it, they were known and recorded. No wonder, though they were naked they were not ashamed (Gen. 2:25). When a person begins to feel ashamed of him or herself, then something is strategically wrong. That was what happened in the fall (Gen. 3:7).

Consequently, marriage is not a thing, an act that a person should as he or she pleases or thinks fabricates, regulates or twists to suit his or her selfish desire (T. B. Maston, 1957:67). In contrast, it is God's plan as shown in Adam and Eve for spouses to reflect their value in what they call each other in the expression and sharing of their lives in love and submission as one.

#### *4.4 A Couple Must not Subordinate their Marriage to any Other Person in Love (vs. 24)*

In verse 24, we see a repeat of the one flesh expression but in a different context. "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife and they will become one flesh" (CSB 1988). This is the consummation of marriage in practical relationship, interdependence, reliance of a husband, and wife with no space for a third party, individual or group. The closest or sublime of a couple's family connections are their parents. But we see here that because a man and woman have become united in marriage, they are to be disconnected from the bond that initially tie them to their parents as the closest of persons in discussion, instruction, planning, execution, confidant, and so on about issues that relates to them as a couple. In otherwise, there is no substitute for either of them. So if even parents in this regard do not count by their position in the place of either of the spouses as described above, who else? There is no one at all.

That is not to say, they do not have anything else to do with their family and parents. They owe them their parental allegiance, respect, obedience, and care. Any other thing must be a shared opinion, awareness, and

agreement of the couple together. The same thing goes for people outside their family union. The reason for this is that by virtue of their marriage, they have become primarily related (“Gen 2:21-25 Humanity,” CSB 2017:8). Thus, it is a process which among other things they have to learn right from the beginning until it begins to flow naturally. In this way, couples submit to themselves in love and a humble obedience to God.

Ortlund (31) describes the phenomenon as a shared life “with total openness, total access, total solidarity, for the rest of their earthly days.” Nonetheless, Gary and Betsy Ricucci (2006:60) view the process as “sharing of life so as to reflect our union with Christ and deepen our relational intimacy with one another so as to glorify God and grow in godliness.” In line with this opinion, Women’s Evangelical Commentary of the Old Testament (2011:2) states that the idea of leaving father and mother (Gen 2:24) is a way by which a husband and his wife make a public commitment of marriage and in the process transfer their primary legal rights from their parents to themselves. Thus, a lifelong bond is initiated for a permanent growth in love, tender affection, and a faithful commitment to each other. The “one flesh” in this context, therefore, denotes the physical union which is the exclusive reserve of the couple.

The Women's Evangelical Commentary (13) agrees that though the concept of the leaving of parents indicates that a new unit is forming, it does not remove the couple from their family ties and responsibilities. However, the new relationship of marriage supersedes that of parents. That is why it is closer than any other. It is a physical unification of two bodies. So, although family ties still exist, yet, “the loyalty between a man and his wife is primary” (13).

#### *4.5 A Couple Must be Firmly United as Helpmeet in Love (vv. 24,25)*

This is the main element of submission in marriage. It is the level at which all other factors dissolve into a whole; a manifestation of the unity between a husband and wife in all spheres of their existence, body, spirit and soul. It involves the totality of their relationship in spoken and unspoken communications, deeds, sharing of hours, food, and other properties, the bed on which they lay, their sleep, worship, and so on. All of these find expression in their collective unity as a couple in the holy self giving act of sex ordained by God for marriage following the principles of monogamy as exemplified in Adam and Eve through creation and enactment (Gen. 2:7, 20, 2:1-24). This awareness would lead us to a consideration of the three dimensions of the collective unity in marriage: physical, psychological, and spiritual.

##### *4.5.1. Physical Unity in Marriage*

One of the things about marriage is for a husband and wife to physically serve as helpers to each other in their self actualization. In this case, the husband does his part and the wife contributes her quota to the mutual sharing of the two in one. Therefore, no room or space is left for another person or persons as in adultery and polygamy. Anything short of this is selfish, ungodly, and a lost. To this end, couples are to hold tight to each other in a physical unity that finds expression in what they do. This is one of the lessons reflected in the instruction, “Therefore, a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh” (Gen. 2:24,25 ESV).

The idea of the holding fast is also a warning not only to other people but including the couple to vigilantly watch against anything or person that could be a hindrance to their lifelong fulfillment (v.25). Thus, a couple’s submission becomes not just an act but a holy reality to be enjoyed in faithfulness and worship in the presence of God. Consequently, White, Jr. opines that marriage is beyond the ordinary unity of a man and woman. It is more than the sharing of a similar name, house or any other thing. Instead, it is all about their physical, psychological, and spiritual unity (16). Accordingly, sexual relationship becomes a symbol of that union. This is not the type of love that goes on in a man or woman lusting after each other. Some marriages are failing because they were not originally centered on true physical and spiritual union. Such marriages are built on lust and getting instead of love and giving (16).

To this end, Henri Blocher (95) uses the information of the missing of a woman around the man leading to her formation to introduce the concept of sexes in view of sexuality. Thus, he states that,

(The word ‘sex’ implies the differentiation of the two, signifying etymologically the dividing of humanity). The emphasis in the text encourages us to reflect further on this fundamental ordering of our race; we shall concentrate ... on the development of Genesis 2.

The text achieves a balance between restraint and openness which is quite admirable. By implication, it denounces the sexual obsession of the Syrian and Canaanite nature cults, involving male and female prostitution. By the same token it exposes the alienation and frenzied escape into the erotic in our own age. This eroticism is often nothing other than despair, scarcely disguised by false frigidity of the sexologists, although it is also the search for a reality that is not artificial, for an opening up of existence, for a way out of the banality of life. The openness of the Bible is equally opposed to Victorian prudery and unhealthy repressions. It gives the proper balance, sets the limits on the place that sex may occupy and discloses its meaning.

By implication, Blocher's assertions apart from showing the importance of a woman to a man as a supportive partner in addition to her place in the process of procreation, provides the basis (marriage according to divine purpose) and significance of sex to humanity. This is contrary to the severe distortion so far inflicted on the process as a result of the vicious acts and depravity of man.

R. R. Reno (2010:75) buttresses Blocher's opinion in his claim that, "the Bible is certainly forthright about the sexual union of men and women." Thus, he explains that the loneliness experienced by Adam portrays his deep desire for a mate (woman); a companion that naturally satisfies both physical and emotional needs. He describes it as "the original elements of human existence." He further explains that, the motivational, emotional feelings or impulse towards sexual union is a form of power of responsibility in a person to exert him or herself in obedience to the right purpose of a cause. Moreover, this ability by which a woman and woman are attracted to each other is put in them by God in the process of the breathing of life (Gen. 2:7). Hence, by the breath, human beings are inbuilt with the capacity to express sexual union in the realm of faith and affinity.

On the basis of the above, faith becomes the standard; God's given condition, the background of marriage on which sexuality as an act of obedience should be expressed. Thus, Reno (75) opines that,

We cannot treat marriage and sexual desire as simply natural aspects of life, any more than we can treat acts of the will or efforts of the intellect as merely biological. Without doubt, human sexuality is instinctual, just as our cognitive faculties are part of the natural equipment of our bodily existence. But instincts and natural abilities must be educated and shaped so that they take a specific form in our actual human life. From the beginning, the divine plan was and remains the same: to order our natural capacities toward our supernatural vocation, which is our entrance into the seventh day, the future of living in fellowship with God.

The seventh day is a reference to Genesis 2:2, a day in which God rested after His work of creation. Reno interprets it as symbolic of God's plan, desire and expectation of human reunion with Him in eternity beginning with the last day. Consequently, sexuality must be exercised according to God's design with restraint and in the confinement of marriage as an act of worship.

This view is also supported by Sherill G. Stevens (1978:19) when he comes up with a presupposition as earlier expressed in this paper that God's idea of not creating the woman alongside the man at the instant leading to the judgement, "It is not good for the man to be alone" (Gen. 2:18, ISV) was not an omission or forgetfulness. Rather, it was a projection of the importance of the role of a woman in man and human existence in general. This was based on the fact that since God had made male and female of every living creature and by His Nature as God, he could not have forgotten to create the counterpart of a man like others. Therefore, the attention so drawn by Him was deliberate for the purpose of showcasing the significance of human sexes and its standard of sexuality.

Thus, Stevens (19) explains Genesis 1:27-28, "So God created mankind in his own image; ... he created them male and female. God blessed the humans by saying to them: 'Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth...' (ISV), by stressing that,

With the creation of human persons, the dimension of sexuality was raised to a new level. The reproductive ability had been created in plants and animals. Distinct male and female genders are present in all of the higher forms of animal life. Of all creation, however, the quality of sexuality is referred to only of human persons. People have sexuality as a distinctive feature of their personhood, not merely as a physical characteristic... Human sexuality is not merely a reproductive capacity. Human reproduction is not merely a function of instinct. Sexuality is a quality of personhood, and reproduction is a matter of personal, moral choice.

Sexuality as a human quality, defines the individual in his or her conformity to divine rules, human norms and values.

Henry M. Morris (1976:102) submits that it is because of the enormous importance of integrity along with the permanence of individual family that God from the beginning makes it very clear that marriage should be kept until death. However, man has distorted this arrangement with the invention of

"polygamy, concubinage, polyandry, easy divorce, adultery, promiscuity and other distortions of the marriage covenant (that) have permeated many cultures, but as the Lord Jesus said: 'From the beginning it was not so' (Matt. 19:8)."

In spite of the perversions, evidence abound from the discovering made by ethnologists and anthropologists that the ideal form of marriage and family life from everywhere and through the ages has been monogamy and its permanent nature. In addition to this, the obedience of God's original command that "a man will leave his father and his mother and cling to his wife, and they will become one flesh" (Gen. 2:24) is the basis by which a man attains real happiness, fulfillment and accomplishment of the purpose of God. Morris (104) also posits that Adam and Eve actually yielded to God's command for one flesh in marriage. Thus, they complemented each other's nature in their physical, mental and spiritual existence.

#### 4.5.2. *Psychological Unity in Marriage*

The psychological aspect of the union of marriage has to do with the understanding of a couple's sense of unity for each other. With reference to Ephesians 5:33, "However let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband" (ESV), White, Jr. (17) stresses that in the same way that a man is interested and concerned about his own well being, he is to have similar feelings towards his wife. By implication, marriage therefore, means the journey together of a man and woman's mind that care and are united in the welfare of each other with love and respect.

#### 4.5.3. *Spiritual Unity in Marriage*

The dimension of the spiritual unity of marriage concerns the presence of the Spirit of God in a husband and wife through His breath (Gen. 2:7; 1 Cor. 6:17). Hence, when a man is joined to God in Christ, his spirit becomes one with Him, who Himself is Spirit. On the other hand, when God's Spirit lives within a man and woman, and they are joined together in holy matrimony, their spirits are joined as well to each other and to the LORD (White, Jr. 20). In this way, marriage is lifted from mundane to a divine level and from sinfulness to holiness. This is the basic, high, and noble idea that the Bible has for marriage.

Consequently, marriage as a spiritual fellowship is not just between a man and woman. Instead, it is a trio of a man and woman as well as God. Thus, without God, there is no marriage. That is what the Bible intends it to be (White, Jr. 20). Adam and Eve exemplified all the aforementioned principles of submission in their marriage. Therefore, there is no gainsaying that indeed, they stand and remain a model for contemporary couples.

### 5. Conclusion

Adam and Eve fulfilled God's purpose and plan for marriage. In this regard, they lived as suitable complement for each other in love and submission, believed, and experienced each other's worth and personality; reflected their values in the name they call each other. In keeping with God's word, they never subordinated themselves to anyone else. In addition, they were strongly united as helpmeet in the frame work of love. All of these were true of them except at the fall (Gen. 3:1-7).

Nevertheless, they got reunited in God's Spirit having repented and were forgiven by Him (Gen. 3:14-15, 21). From that time onward, no outrageous sin was ever committed by them. All through the Scriptures and of course history, no marriage has been so celebrated. The ceremony of their marriage was arranged and executed by God Himself. He took the lead in the process. He blessed and kept them in His fellowship all through their lives.

Consequently, they will forever remain the best of couple and a standard for others with all that marriage has to offer physically, mentally, and spiritually. By emulating them, it will enable contemporary couples and those intending to marry to work and live in God's plan and purpose. Thus, it will bring and keep them in union with one another and fellowship with Him. At the same time, it will bestow on them His blessings of a lifelong joy, peace of marital union, and the hope of continua bliss in His presence for eternity.

Therefore, God designs marriage to be permanently upheld with integrity because of its importance to the family. It guarantees peace, value, harmony and growth for the home and society. It aids the couple to maintain their sense of individual and collective worth, significance, and self actualization. On the contrary, there has been a distortion of God's ideal of marriage which affects marital cohesion and submission through the ages with all vices of sexuality on the basis of instinct. Nevertheless, human sexuality is not a matter of instinct like in animals but conscious expression of personality endowed with wisdom, and sense of reasoning as bequeathed with the image of God through His breath in creation.

God intends that sex in man should be treated, shaped, and expressed with a sense of responsibility, respect for self and value for the other person. It should conform to ethical, moral, norms and values with a sense of godliness as a vocation and against promiscuity, adultery, concubinage, polygamy and polyandry as well as divorce, whether easy or otherwise including same sex marriage. Sexual vices downgrade humanity and prevent marriage and its submission. Consequently, they are acts of disobedience to God, separates from Him, and frost with negative consequences.

Moreover, because human sexuality is not just a matter of procreation as it is instinctive in animals, avoidance of reproduction should not be a menace against sexual fulfillment as an objective act of marriage. Thus, couples should plan and structure their family in a way that it does not interfere with their mutual sexual responsibility which is still a problem in some marriages around the world. Adam and Eve were not guilty of sexual degeneration. Though, they had the command, "Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth..." (Gen. 1:28), yet, they had their children at reasonable spaces, males and females (Gen. 4:1, 2, 25; 5:3 4-5).

By implication, they had what they could cater for by not allowing their need of reproduction to affect their intimacy and sexuality. Furthermore, they kept to God's ideal of integrity and permanency in marriage with a view on sexual chastity irrespective of the many years they lived and the longevity they had (Gen. 5:4-5). The revelation made by ethnological and anthropological studies which attests to the existence of monogamy and stable marriage system at different places, and across ages as being the ideal is quite important in this regard.



Besides, modern man is in no way different in composition and form from their ancestors that they cannot keep with the godly and ethical practices of the old. For that reason, the difference in time does not separate nor exonerate them from the adverse effects of every sexual perversion whether in or out of marriage as being practiced in contemporary time.

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### **Biography**

M. M. Oboh was born at Ibore, Irrua in Esan Central Local Government Area of Edo State, Nigeria, 31<sup>st</sup> March, 1967. He was brought up as a Muslim. Hence, the second of his initials stands for Musa, while the other is Michael being the first name. He got converted to Christianity on 7<sup>th</sup> June, 1986.

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Thereafter, having received the call into the Gospel Ministry, he was admitted into the Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary, Ogbomoso, Oyo State, Nigeria and graduated with a BA (Bachelor of Arts degree in affiliation to the University of Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria) in 1996, and B.Th (Bachelor of Theology in affiliation to Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky, USA) in 1996; M.Th (Master of Theology with Islamic Studies as major and minor in Christian Ethics also in affiliation to Southern, USA) in 2000; PhD in Theology, NBTS, Ogbomoso, 2008 and PhD in World Religions from the University of Jos, Plateau State, Nigeria with affiliation to NBTS, Ogbomoso, 2008.

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