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*Throughout  
the Old Testament,  
God's love for his people is  
described as the love of a  
husband for his bride.  
In the New Testament,  
Christ embodies this love.*

-GN 18-19



# Session 1: God's Plan for Marriage "In the Beginning"

NOTES

## Male & Female He Created Them

### 1. The Bible & Marriage

We might not think the Bible has much to say about marriage. Yet, in a certain sense, the Bible from beginning to end is a story about (1) \_\_\_\_\_.

- The Bible begins and ends with marriages—Adam and Eve and Christ and the Church.

- We can look to these marital "bookends" of Genesis and Revelation as a key for interpreting what lies between.

- Applying this analogy, we learn that God's eternal plan is to "marry" us (Hos 2:19).

- God wanted this eternal "marital plan" to be so obvious to us that he stamped an image of it in our very being by creating us as male and female and calling us to marriage.

"For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one.' This is a great mystery, and I mean in reference to Christ and the church" (Eph 5:31-32).

- In this way, marriage becomes a "sacrament," or physical sign, of God's love in the world.
- The human body and sex, then, are not only biological realities, but theological realities.\*

1a. "The Church cannot therefore be understood ... unless we keep in mind the 'great mystery' involved in the creation of man as male and female and the vocation of both to conjugal love, to fatherhood and to motherhood" (LF 19).

\*This workshop is based largely on collection of 129 short talks, known as the Theology of the Body by Blessed Pope John Paul II. The beautiful vision of the human body, marital love, and sexual union outlined in these talks has already begun a sexual counter-revolution. To learn more, visit [TheTheologyofTheBody.com](http://TheTheologyofTheBody.com)

1b. "It is obvious that the analogy of earthly human love ... cannot offer an adequate and complete understanding of ... the divine mystery ... *The mystery remains transcendent with respect to this analogy* as with respect to any other analogy with which we try to express it in human language" (TB 95b:1).

## NOTES

### 2. Christ Provides the Key to a Joy-Filled Marriage

22-25 “For your hardness of heart Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so” (Mt 19:8).

- Jesus is trying to help us realize that something deep in the human heart has disturbed God’s original plan for marriage.
- What was it? If we answer this question, we will discover the root cause of all marital problems ... *and* pave the way for a solution to those problems.

**2a.** “According to faith the disorder we notice so painfully [in the male-female relationship] does not stem from the *nature* of man and woman, nor from the nature of their relations, but from *sin*. As a break with God, the first sin had for its first consequence the rupture of the original communion between man and woman” (CCC 1607).

**2b.** “Jesus came to restore creation to the purity of its origins” (CCC 2336).

**2c.** “Since they are formed in the image of God also inasmuch as they form an authentic communion of persons, the first man and the first woman must constitute the beginning and model of that communion for all men and women who in any period unite with each other so intimately that they are “one flesh” (TB 10:3).

### 3. Created in God’s Image

19-20 “Then God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.’ ... So God created man in his own image ... male and female he created them. And God blessed them, and God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply’” (Gn 1:26-27).

- This means that somehow, in the complementarity of the sexes, we image God. Somehow, as male and female, we make *visible* God’s *invisible* mystery.



- What is God's invisible mystery?

3a. "God has revealed his innermost secret: God himself is an eternal exchange of love, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and he has destined us to share in that exchange" (CCC 221).

3b. "Creating the human race in his own image ... God inscribed in the humanity of man and woman the vocation ... of love and communion" (FC 11).

3c. "Man cannot live without love. He remains a being that is incomprehensible for himself, his life is senseless, if love is not revealed to him, if he does not ... experience it and make it his own" (RH 10).

3d. "... from the account of the Yahwist text the concept of 'image of God,' we can deduce that *man became the image of God not only through his own humanity, but also through the communion of persons*, which man and woman form from the very beginning. ... On all this, right from the beginning, the blessing of fruitfulness descended, linked with human procreation" (TB 9:3).

### Points to Ponder

Is marriage the only vocation that reflects our creation as male and female in the image of God? If not, what other vocation(s) correspond to our call to love as God loves?

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## 4. Loving as God Loves

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"This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you" (Jn 15:12). "Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh" (Gn 2:24).

- There are numerous ways to describe God's love, but four qualities in particular stand out. God's love is (2) \_\_\_\_\_,  
and \_\_\_\_\_.
- Another name for this kind of love is (3) \_\_\_\_\_.
- This is precisely what bride and groom commit to at the altar and express with their whole selves (body and soul) by becoming "one flesh."
- God designed sexual intercourse so we could mirror his own eternal, life-giving love!

4a. "Every man and every woman fully realizes himself or herself through the sincere gift of self. For spouses, the moment of conjugal union constitutes a very particular expression of this. It is then that a man and a woman [are meant to] become a mutual gift to each other" (LF 12).

## NOTES

### 5. Nakedness Revealed God's Original Plan of Love

"And the man and his wife were both naked, and were not ashamed" (Gn 2:25).

- Pope John Paul II calls this the "key" for understanding God's original plan for man and woman (TB 52).
- They experienced sexual desire only as the desire to love in God's image. There was no shame (or fear) in love. "Perfect love casts out fear" (1 Jn 4:18).

#### Points " Ponder

If this is the way God created sexual desire, why isn't this the way we experience it?

5a. "The human body, with its sex—its masculinity and femininity—seen in the very mystery of creation, is not only a source of fruitfulness and of procreation, as in the whole natural order, but contains 'from the beginning' the 'spousal' attribute, that is, the power to express love: precisely that love in which the human person becomes a gift and—through this gift—fulfills the very meaning of his being and existence" (TB 15:1).

5b. "God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good" (Gn 1:31). "'Nakedness' signifies the original good of the divine vision."

5c. "Against this vast background we also understand that ... together with man, holiness has entered the visible world, the world created for him. ... Consciousness of the gift conditions in this case 'the sacrament of the body': in his body as man or woman, man senses himself as a subject of holiness" (TB 19:5).

### 23-26 6. God Gave Us the Capacity to Choose (But Some Choices Are Always Wrong)

"And the Lord God commanded the man saying, 'You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die'" (Gn 2:16-17).

- Why was this commandment only given to "Adam" and not the animals? The human person is the only creature in the visible world with (4) \_\_\_\_\_. This is why "there was not found a helper fit for him" (Gn 2:20) among the animals.
- Freedom is given as the capacity to (5) \_\_\_\_\_, to do good and avoid evil. But how do we know what is good and what is evil? How do we know what is loving and what is not?

- As his *creatures*, we must trust in God's providence and not seek to determine good and evil for ourselves. The moment we do, we cut ourselves off from the life and happiness God intends. We "die."

**6a.** The "power to decide what is good and what is evil does not belong to man, but to God alone." Man "possesses an extremely far reaching freedom, since he can eat 'of every tree of the garden.' But his freedom is not unlimited: it must halt before the 'tree of the knowledge of good and evil,' for it is called to accept the moral law given by God" (VS 35).

**6b.** "The 'tree of the knowledge of good and evil' symbolically evokes the insurmountable limits that man, being a creature, must freely recognize and respect with trust. Man is dependent on his Creator and subject to ... the moral norms that govern the use of freedom" (CCC 396).

## 7. A Snake in the Marital Garden

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The Serpent said to the woman, "Did God say, 'You shall not eat of any tree of the garden'? ... You will not die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil" (Gn 3:1-5).



- The snake's insinuation: "God doesn't want you to be like him; God is withholding something from you; God doesn't (6) \_\_\_\_\_ you. His commands aren't for your happiness. If you really want to be happy, don't listen to God. Do your own thing."
- Because of this insidious deception, men and women throughout history have bought into the lie that God is not our loving Father, but our enemy.
- There has been a constant pressure on us to reject God, even to the point of hating him. Following his will comes to be seen not as the sure road to happiness that it is, but as a threat to our happiness.



## 8. The Entrance of Shame

"Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves aprons" (Gn 3:7).

- When they disobeyed God, what "died" was the love of God in their hearts. Void of God's inspiration, sexual desire became inverted, self-seeking.
- Lust, therefore, is sexual desire void of God's love. It is a "reduction" of God's original plan. It doesn't offer more, but less.
- We cover our bodies in a fallen world not because they are bad, but because they are "very good," and we want to protect their goodness from the degradation of lust.

**8a.** "Man has shame of the body because of concupiscence. More exactly, he has shame not so much of the body, but more precisely of concupiscence" (TB 28:5).

**8b.** Shame also has a positive meaning as "a natural form of self-defense for the person against the danger of descending or being pushed into the position of an object for sexual use" (LR 182).

**8c.** "The 'heart' has become a battlefield between love and concupiscence. The more concupiscence dominates the heart, the less the heart experiences the spousal meaning of the body ..." (TB 32:3).

## Points to Ponder

How is lust (disordered sexual desire) manifested differently in men and women? Why is pornography viewed primarily by men? Why are romance novels read primarily by women? Do these offer a realistic portrayal of man and woman's relationship? Are they an aid to teaching us the meaning of self-giving love?

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## Summary

## What's It Mean for Our Marriage?

- God created us male and female and calls us to "be fruitful and multiply" in order to reveal his own mystery of love and enable us to participate in it.
- This means that marriage can only satisfy our deep longing for love and union to the degree that it images God's love.
- The sin of our first parents disoriented man and woman's desire for each other. Men and women must now resist the selfish sting of lust and the tendency to use each other if they are to experience the happiness for which they long.