

GOD REVEALED

FINDING GOD
IN THE MARRIAGE RELATIONSHIP



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BROKEN LEAF MINISTRIES

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God Revealed: Finding God in the Marriage Relationship

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In the dimensionless Aether...



...in an unknown place that lives outside of time, two immensely powerful beings meet. For the first, the sibilant words of his onetime friend emanate from a shapeless darkness standing before him.

“Join us,” the dark voice urged! “Join us! Learn what real power is!”

“You urge me to leave the light to seek for power,” responded the agent of light. “It is *not* power that I seek.”

“The light is nothing,” replied the darkness! Zeal and hatred drove its words. “Compared to the power of the dark, it is nothing! What do you seek?”

“To know Him.” His eyes took on a distant cast full of desire. “To understand Him. To serve Him.” Zeal also

drove his words. “He *is* the light, and you ask me to abandon Him?”

“You cannot know Him, not as a mere servant. You must become like Him if you are to know Him.” The darkness began to writhe, eager passion driving its words as it sought to convince. “Has He ever shown Himself to you? Have you ever seen past this glory He hides behind to see who He is?”

“No.” The agent of light lowered his eyes in regret. “His glory is too great. His light is too intense. I cannot see Him.”

Thinking his words had convinced and that victory was close, the darkness seemed to puff its chest, “Look at me! I am powerful like Him! I choose my own path even as He has always chosen His. I define what is right and wrong for myself. I am like Him! That is how you can know Him. Become like Him.”

“You do not look so powerful to me. You do not look ‘like Him’. You say I can know Him by joining you in the darkness. How can that be? He *is* the light, but you say I can know the light by leaving the light? How foolish.”

Desperation began to fill the voice of the dark one. “Join me,” it demanded! The darkness roiled in agitation. Dark lightning flashed from its dark eyes. Its voice

thundered with anger. “Join me! I am powerful! Throw off the chains of the light and become free like me!”

Making his decision, the agent of light stepped back. “I am not so sure you are free. I know you are not powerful. I will not join you in the darkness.” Standing tall, he declared, “I choose the light! Leave me now, for I choose the light! I choose the light! I choose the light...,” and as his declaration became a chant, light gathered in the center of his being until, lifting his sword high in exaltation, it burst forth with a flash of light that filled the sky, and darkness fled.

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God Revealed!



Why am I writing this book? Is it merely an intellectual exercise? Well, God has gifted me as a teacher, and I do delight in discovering truth and love conveying that truth to others. Is that why I'm writing it? In part, yes, but that's only part of it. There is a deeper drive that motivates me in an even greater way: I want to know Him. *I want to know Him!!!* I want to understand His ways. I want to touch God the person and gain at least a little insight into what makes Him be that person. In the process, I want to be touched by Him, filled by Him, consumed by Him, and find my purpose in Him. I want to be one with Him. And I want everyone else to share with me that same desire and experience those things with me. Revelation can be found in the writing process, and that's why I'm writing this book. I want to see God Revealed!

How can God be so far from me and at the same time intimately touch me in the depths of my soul? During the course of this writing project, life for Ruth and me has been incredibly difficult. The enemy seems to be having a heyday with us. Constantly, my every effort is turned back in defeat, and affliction rains down on our heads in an unrelenting downpour. “Where are you God?!” has been my cry. In the midst of my trials, the silence of the heavens has been deafening. Where is His help? Where is His comfort? I want to rage, “*Why have you abandoned me, God?*” Yet, I know He *is* with me. In my spirit, He touches me. In sweet worship, He fills me to overflowing.

That is why I am writing this book. He built Himself into me – *I am like Him!* I *can* know Him in deep and intimate ways, and as the ink flows onto this paper, revelation after revelation of who He is, how He works, and how He loves us pours into my soul.

Yes, He has shown me great truths, and, yes, to convey those truths to others is deeply fulfilling to my teacher's heart. But my motivation is largely selfish. I write because I want to know Him.

Chapter 1: Finding God



“ *For everything was created by Him, in heaven and on earth, the visible and the invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him.*

Colossians 1:16

What kind of beings make up the host of heaven?¹ Some we know of such as the thrones, dominions, rulers, and authorities mentioned in the scripture above. The Bible speaks of angelic majesties, cherubim, seraphim, flying creatures covered with eyes (Rev 4:6,) and, of course, your plain, old, ordinary angel shows up in the scriptures a

lot. Are there others living in the land beyond the dimensions? Perhaps. It doesn't really matter. To know that heaven, the place where God dwells, is populated by these heavenly creatures is enough. They live in a glory we cannot possibly imagine. That being true, isn't it interesting that there are knowledge and understandings that these heavenly inhabitants long to delve into but can't? There are mysteries rooted and revealed in the first three dimensions of our puny ten-dimensional universe², mysteries connected, somehow, to a rebellious human race. How is it that the entities who inhabit God's realm find those mysteries so compelling that they are filled with a longing to understand them? It's true! The Apostle Peter wrote, "*Angels desire to look into these things*" (1 Peter 1:12). Paul said, "*This is so God's multi-faceted wisdom may now be made known through the church to the rulers and authorities in the heavens*" (Eph 3:10). We tend to think of angels as being all-knowing, exalted beings, yet there is much about God that they simply don't know or understand. What's amazing is that these heavenly ones watch us – you and me – and marvel at what they see! Why? Well, it's really quite simple: what they see in us is God revealed!

Our concept of mankind's purpose is too restricted. Our understanding of why God created the human race is far too narrow. Are we here to serve God? Yes. Are we

here to bring others to a place where they can know Him? Yes. Are we here to expand the borders of the Kingdom of God and bring Earth into obedience to Christ? Yes! Yes! Yes! Yet that vision isn't big enough. Mankind's creation wasn't about mankind or what mankind can accomplish for God. Every one of us is an image of God Himself. (See Gen 1:26-27.) Do you know how profound that thought is? No, of course you don't. The full extent of that concept is impossible for us to grasp, yet our purpose for existing is all wrapped up in that all important truth.

The book of Job begins with a narrative describing a time when darkness approached the throne of God. With venomous words it spewed out its hatred for Job, one of God's earthbound images who, struggling through life in a world of darkness, had managed to keep the Creator first in his life. God, in His wisdom, by His sovereign choice, and in keeping with His love for Job, said yes to the evil one's designs. All of heaven watched. All of heaven wondered. All of heaven saw in Job and in his struggles a reflection of God and His nature. Why? Because Job was an image of God! What they could not see in their natural state, in the heavenly realms where they live, they saw in the suffering endurance of an image of God living on the lowly three-dimensional plane.

Some heavenly occupants (perhaps a third? See Rev 12:4) turned away from knowing God. They rebelled against the "chains" of living in the Light (Psalms 2:3). In seeking to be like Him, the darkness they chose to follow became their prison. Meanwhile the rest of the host of heaven watched mankind, that race of God's images, to see and wonder at a God revealed.



AT THE TIME of this writing, my wife and I have been married for over forty years. In this day and age, a forty-year marriage is a real accomplishment. Still, I can't be *too* proud. I know many people, most of them Christians, who have been married much longer. Unfortunately, I know even more people for whom the concept of a life-long marriage lies completely outside their thinking zone. For them, divorce is the norm, and the idea of a commitment that lasts "till death do us part" just doesn't compute. Indeed, it has become the norm for young couples to shack up together and even have children in unmarried relationships before marriage is even considered. Commitment isn't on the agenda anymore. In my younger years, before it became politically incorrect to say it this way, we called that kind of lifestyle "living in sin." Unpopular or not, calling it "living in sin" is pretty accurate. Couples

living together outside of marriage truly are living sinful lives, and this arrangement grieves the heart of God. Why? What is it about marriage that makes it so important? Why does God regard the act of sex as sinful and repugnant if it is performed outside of a monogamous, heterosexual marriage relationship? The Bible makes it abundantly clear that *any* form of sexual activity – from bestiality to homosexuality to pre- and extra-marital sex to rape – is disgusting to God (Gen 19:1-8, Jude 7; Lev 18:22-23, Rom 1:24-27, 1 Cor 6:9-10, 1 Thess 4:3-5). However, when sex is limited to the boundaries of wedded commitment, it receives His special approval and blessing. Most people aren't aware that God filled an entire book of the Bible, The Song of Solomon, with explicit imagery of the physical side of romance between a man and his bride. Why? I'll even go a step further in my questioning: why did God create sex in the first place? Oh, yes, He is to blame!

In recent years, our enemy, Satan, has been successful in two ways: First, he has promoted the idea that sex is a casual pleasure that should be indulged without restriction. That idea has been embraced so thoroughly by American popular culture that those of us who believe otherwise now experience persecution when we object to that philosophy and have the audacity to say so. Second, he has attacked the institution of marriage

(and the stable families that naturally result) until strong and lasting marriages have now become scarce and hard to find. It has reached the point where popular society has cast off even the concept that marriage is between a man and a woman – heterosexual in nature – and forced upon us a redefinition that allows men to marry men or women to marry women. The flood gates are open. Already there are court cases where polygamists are using this redefinition in an attempt to invalidate the laws we have in place forbidding that debauched and oppressive practice.

This wholesale destruction of marriage in America, this twisting and redefinition of the very concept of what marriage is, is having an enormously negative impact on our society because marriage is an expression of a far deeper truth than we all realize. That deep truth, God's reasons for making marriage sacred, is what this book explores. Marriage is deeply special to God and its purpose goes far beyond the nurturing commitment we usually associate with it. God's deep purpose for marriage turns even our need for families to be stable (something that any society must have if it is to survive), into a side issue. This purpose involves His heart. It involves His very nature. By violating and redefining His concept of marriage, we place ourselves in grave danger, not only from all the negative social and economic effects the brokenness of the institution

of marriage is bringing on our nation, *but from God Himself*. God is not to be mocked! We cannot just dismiss Him lightly and go on our merry way! It is for good reason that the Scriptures admonish us to *fear* Him (Matt 10:28)!

This connection between the concept of marriage and God's heart and nature is the focus of the discussion contained in this book. In the course of that discussion, we may hit on topics that are pertinent to the nuts and bolts of married life, but – and please remember this, dear reader – the practicalities of marriage are not what this book is all about! The focus of this writing is on what marriage reveals to us about God and how we and the church relate to Him. Other authors far more qualified than I have written about the nuts and bolts of married life, but what we're after here is a deepening of our knowledge of God, His nature, and our relationship with Him. So, as you read the chapters that follow, do so in the spirit of Philippians 3:10:

““For my determined purpose is that I may know Him, that I may progressively become more deeply and intimately acquainted with Him, perceiving and recognizing and understanding the wonders of His Person more strongly and more clearly, and that I may in that same way come to know the power outflowing

from His resurrection which it exerts over believers, and that I may so share His sufferings as to be continually transformed in spirit into His likeness even to His death...”

(From the Amplified Bible. Some punctuation modified by the author).

Some Practical Thoughts

I have found that when I am writing, it is really easy to get off on rabbit trails. By that, I mean it is easy to spend way too much time discussing topics that, while important, are side issues. We can't let them distract us from the purpose of the text. Still, those topics *are* important and *do* relate to the text, so I have moved those discussions into footnotes or, if more space and time are required, to the Appendix. So, read the footnotes! They do contain important information that will enrich your experience as you read this book. The Appendix articles are also important. Please, as time allows, include them in your reading.

Keep in mind that it is not my intention to cover every aspect of the picture that marriage presents to us of our relationship with God. I suppose what I'm really after here is to get you thinking in these terms. My prayer is that the Holy Spirit will open your mind and heart to

this same kind of revelation and, in doing so, deepen and enrich your relationship with Him.

Finally, please remain aware that much of what I discuss comes from the ideal view of how God designed marriage. Unfortunately, sin distorts everything! Husbands fail their wives, and wives fail their husbands, all because they are sinful people. Even Christian marriages often become distorted because, although we have been redeemed by Jesus' blood and share in His resurrection, until His return we still deal with the "old man" (Col 3:9-10). Our fallen natures constantly plague us, pulling us away from Christ and motivating us to treat our spouses wrongly. Still, in spite of that struggle, the ideal view reveals the purpose for God's original design. It is to that greater purpose that we must submit, so that is where the discussions in this book begin.

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1. We tend to view the term "heavenly host" as a global reference to angels. We can lump them all together that way if we like, but the Bible presents them in diverse terms. Different angels have different tasks and different appearances. Some are bizarre in appearance, some are warriors and some are tied to a geographical location. For a good development of the theology surrounding angels and how God delegates tasks/authority to them read the book *The Unseen Realm: Recovering the Supernatural Worldview of the Bible* by Michael S. Heiser, 2015 Lexam Press.

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2. I'm referring here to the three physical dimensions – length, width, and height (3D)– that we deal with every day. The world we live in. Quantum physicists tell us that our universe actually has 10 physical dimensions. We find it hard to visualize those higher dimensions, numbers four through ten, because we are limited by our 3D perspective. Yet science and mathematics tells us that they are there. (Of course, God transcends all 10 of those dimensions.)

Chapter 2: Adam



“Hmmm...”, he thought aloud. “Four legs. A long, narrow face. Sharp teeth. What is that thing on his back end?” His contemplation turned into a happy hum as he continued to consider that strange appendage. When he started his hum, those strange objects (one on each of the two creatures) increased the tempo of their back-and-forth movement. “I think,” he said, sitting back on his heels, a grin beginning to form, “I think we will call that a ‘tail.’” His grin finally broke out in full force. Looking up at his companions, he continued, “We will call these two ‘dogs’ and,” he paused for a moment pointing to the rapidly moving tails, “that incessant movement we will call a ‘wag.’” The two, newly-named dogs bounced with excitement and joy. Somehow, the man knew that these creatures would be his friends forever. Laughing

with the pleasure of the moment, he knelt down between them and pulled them into an embrace. Two wet licks graced his face, and he looked up at the Father.

"I love these two, Father! They're awesome!"

The six of them stood on top of a low, grass covered hill near the center of an extensive garden. When he had first opened his eyes, there had been only dirt as far as he could see. Then, the Son started singing and green things had begun popping out of the ground, some growing to reach high into the sky.¹ ("Trees" his Father had called the large ones.) This place, they told him, was a special garden. He was to stay here while he learned how to govern this world they had made. The Father, the Son, and the Unseen One stood laughing with him as he sent the two, newly-minted dogs on their way.² All three had been there at his beginning, The Father's and the Son's smiling eyes peered down at him when his eyes first opened. The Unseen One was there also; His presence was easy to notice. The Father had spoken first, "Your name is Adam." Adam loved them, but they were something of a mystery. They were three people, but somehow only one. Adam shrugged. Someday he would ask Them – ask Him – about it, but right now, he was too busy meeting his companions in this world.

The Son pointed down and directed Adam's attention to a spot on the ground where the soil was erupting. A long, narrow creature, red in color and constructed in segments, crawled out of the ground near his right toe and then proceeded to wriggle its way across his foot. Laughing at the sensation, Adam picked up his newest friend. Cupping it in his hand, he said, "You, friend, shall be called 'worm,' and you shall care for the ground from which I came." Excavating a small depression in the moist ground, he placed the worm back into the soil from which it had crawled.

So, it continued. God, the One who was Three, brought to him an endless variety of animals, all destined to be his companions and friends on this brand-new world. To each, Adam gave a name. Some were much like he was, built nearly the same but different. He wondered at them and then looked at himself, thinking how he was different from all of the other creatures God had made.

"You have met them all, Adam," said his Father. The Unseen One flowed around Adam, was in him, moved through him. Suddenly, He erupted from Adam's soul with a burst of joyful laughter. "They are so wonderful, my Father! I love them all! Thank you for gifting them to me." Feeling serious, he paused. "They are like me but different. You did not make another like me." His perplexed statement was both a question and a request. The Son reached over and touched Adam's side, tracing

the lowest rib of his torso. "Yes. There will be one more. You came from the dust, Adam. All these," He waved at the crowd of creatures spreading across the garden, "came from the dust. This one shall come from you." Touching Adam's forehead, He said, "Sleep, my friend."³



WHENEVER I TALK to someone about the Scripture, especially when we're discussing Bible prophecy, I usually emphasize that God built layer after layer of meaning and application into the scripture when He wrote it. The truth is, using the term "meaning" misses the point, but I struggle to find an adequate word that can describe how God wrote His life into the scripture, filling it with revelation piled on top of revelation. God truly is a master craftsman! He writes in such a way that each successive revealed truth draws us deeper into Him and deeper into knowing His heart. As we allow the Holy Spirit to open the word of God to us, we find ourselves drawn deeper into knowing how He thinks and how He feels (Eph 3:18-19; 1 Cor 2:10; Phil 3:10). Yes, God has feelings, and for us to grab hold of that concept is important! He feels! He can be hurt. He knows joy. He knows sorrow. And He is willing to share that part of who He is with us. When He inspired the men who wrote the Scriptures, He went to great

lengths, writing Himself and His heart into their words. Often the writers themselves were oblivious to the deeper meanings contained in the words they put onto paper. He did the same thing when He displayed Himself in creation. We see Him both in the vastness of space and the intricate workings of a simple cell. The more we dig into the workings of this universe, the more we understand Him. Every new discovery dug out by a research scientist is a fresh revelation of God at which we can marvel.

But we see Him best when we look at ourselves. All heaven was watching as, standing on that hilltop in Eden, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit brought each newly created animal to Adam for him to name. In Adam, they saw an image, a perfect reflection, of God, and as Heaven's occupants watched him react and begin his rule over the earth, they understood more about their God and learned more of His ways (1 Pet 1:12; Eph 3:10). We Christians tend to think that our lives here on this planet are all about our growth in Him and our work for the Kingdom of God, but we focus too narrowly. We are being observed! As angel eyes watch us, their eyes are opened to see Him. Through us, God is giving them a chance to see who He is. That is why He built Himself into the very fabric of who and what we are. So, grab hold of this truth, servant of Christ: our purpose for living is much bigger than we know!

When we read the first two chapters of Genesis, we get two views of the events of creation. The full, wide-angle view comes first, followed closely by a series of up close detail shots.⁴ In Chapter 1, the camera lens is set to an infinite focal length: the universe begins, the stars ignite, and the planets start spinning in their orbits. A special blue planet rests in the palm of God's hand, a paradise crafted to be a place where God and man can dwell together. Chapter 2 focuses on one day, number six, and gives us up close shots of Adam receiving the breath of life and animals springing from the ground to meet him and be named.

There is a side to God's nature that most people miss -- He loves to delegate! In Col 1:16, Paul describes how an authoritative structure of principalities, powers, and angelic majesties has been put in place to govern His universe. Within the sphere of their authority and in keeping with God's nature and ways, these spiritual stewards had/have leave to act as they saw/see fit. We see this same principle in action when Moses found himself overwhelmed with governing the fledgling Israeli nation. God, through Moses' father-in-law Jethro, told Moses to set up a system of lesser judges to minister to the people (Ex 18:13-26). Each of these "lower court" judges had the right to act as they saw fit *within their sphere of authority*.⁵ The basic expectation here, whether you are talking about an angelic majesty,

Moses, one of Moses' under-judges, or you or me, is that everyone is expected to operate in sync with God, His ways, and His desires. A true judge, whether operating within the body of Christ or working in our secular justice system, must hear from and rely on the Holy Spirit as he makes his decisions. Justice becomes perverted and twisted without input from God.

Mankind was created to rule in that same, delegated fashion. God's intention, when He created our race, was that we should rule over the earth and all that is in it. Adam began mankind's rule over the earth when he gave each animal a name. Think about it. All children receive their names from their parents. It is the first exercise of parental authority every father and mother make. In the same way, naming each animal was the first time Adam exercised his authority over the earth.⁶ Adam had the authority, the right, to name every living thing on the earth and; therefore, every living thing on the earth was under Adam's rule. Even so, God named Adam (and with him all mankind) and ruled over him. Adam's (and by extension mankind's) rule over creation is an "under God" kind of thing. We rule this planet and all life on it, but that rule can only be legitimately exercised as an extension of our responsibility to God. We are under authority and should act that way.

Although Adam was a perfect being, he was not complete. In fact, God had deliberately designed him to

be incomplete. For instance, Adam could not reproduce. The worm that crawled across his toes was a hermaphrodite; it could reproduce as either male or female. Some species of earthworm are also parthenogenetic; they can reproduce asexually, not needing another worm of the same kind in order to make new worms. Adam wasn't constructed that way. He needed a counterpart if there were ever to be more human beings on the earth. Yet, his incomplete structure went even deeper. Perhaps my use of the word "incomplete" is not entirely accurate. Adam was a perfect image of God, and as such, he had, embedded in his spirit and soul, all of God's attributes. For instance, God is love, so Adam had in him a loving nature. God is a nurturer, so Adam had a strong compulsion to nurture the world over which God had given him authority. God is aggressive in pursuing His goals and desires and protecting His creation. Since Adam was an image of God, that same aggression was built into his nature as well. All of God's nature, His kindness, joy, peace, sense of justice, mercy and so forth were embedded in Adam's soul. Yet God had deliberately crafted him with some of those things out of balance. For example, aggression stands in the forefront of the male nature with the impulse to nurture taking a secondary position. When Adam met Eve, he found a being who had those "out-of-balance" attributes reversed. The feminine nature perfectly completes and balances the male nature, and the mascu-

line nature perfectly completes and balances the female nature. This imbalance is why, beginning with Adam, the God-designed masculine nature can only find fulfillment – life-satisfaction – through interaction with the feminine. And vice versa, of course.

To make that distinction is unpopular in today's feminist world, even though it is a self-evident and inescapable fact that men and women are different. The politically correct police do their best to silence anyone who points out that difference. Still, it is a truth that is obvious to all. God not only made male and female different, but He built into our natures a deep need to interact with the opposite gender. He even built into our natures an intense drive to reproduce and then made it impossible fulfill that purpose without male-female interaction.

Why?

What was God thinking when He designed us that way? We are created in His image, but that image is not fully balanced and complete unless male and female are joined together. This concept is the foundation for Genesis 2:24 :*"This is why a man leaves his father and mother and bonds with his wife, and they become one flesh."* When the two are joined together in marriage and that marriage is consummated in the act of sex, they become one, and God's image is made complete!

A husband and his wife can together look at themselves and see a reflection of God our Creator. Find a marriage that works well, and you will see God reflected. Amazingly, you will even see Him in a tumultuous, dysfunctional couple. As bad as sin is, it cannot succeed in fully obscuring who He is. The reflection of God in the institution of marriage is so strong that it is not even necessary for a married couple to be Christian for God's image to shine through!

Understand this – masculinity and femininity, the male/female relationship, and the concept and institution of marriage were designed by God so that they could reflect who He is! Looking at our male and female natures this way helps us to make sense out of why such a battle is raging today in America over the sanctity of marriage. It explains why Satan has made marriage a primary target of his attacks. He hates God, and he hates everything of God in this world. He especially hates the image of God he sees reflected by marriage, so he does all he can to twist, distort, and destroy it. The current debate in America over gay marriage is a case in point. If God ordained that the male/female interaction seen in marriage should reflect Him and His nature, how contrary to that purpose is a supposed union between two people of the same sex? You cannot take a relationship based on lust, control, and extreme rebellion and say it serves God's purpose.⁷

It does not. God calls homosexuality an abomination (Lev 18:22; Rom 1:24-27), and it is doubly so when wrapped in a façade falsely called "marriage." At this writing, the gay marriage agenda is a highly effective tool in the hands of those who hate Christianity. During the first three centuries after Jesus ascended, the Roman Empire systematically persecuted Christians because they refused to bow down and worship images of the Emperor. Christians were given the choice of compromising their faith and denying Christ or being tortured and killed. The gay marriage agenda is a similar tool being used against Christians in America today. State and local governments across our nation are using coercion and intimidation to try to force Christians to bow before their gay marriage idol. Businesses have been shut down. Jobs have been lost. The gay marriage agenda has become, at least for the times we live in, a "Mark of the Beast" without which one can't do business (Rev 13:16-17). We have not yet shed blood in our battle here in America, but how long until these enemies of Christ begin arresting us? How long until torture and murder become part of their attacks on us? The vicious, vitriolic hatred that gay marriage proponents spew toward those who stand against it reflects Satan's hatred for marriage and how it reflects God's image.⁸

Let me stop here and make something clear – sin distorts everything! I have been discussing marriage and how the masculine and feminine natures must interact to find true fulfillment, but I have been speaking in the ideal. However, this ideal image of marriage is true, and we who follow Christ, by walking in the Spirit (Gal 5:16) must seek to let it be as real in our lives as possible so that God can be clearly seen in us. Still, sin and the way it pollutes everything is a reality that we will not fully escape until we stand before God's throne in heaven. Even in Christian men and women, sin distorts us. Both genders are guilty. Instead of loving and nurturing their wives and children, husbands often let themselves become focused on their toys (hot rods, motorcycles, sports, or some other idolatry). Some men place their work before their families by, denying their wives and children the time with him they should have. The list goes on. Many wives deny their husbands the respect they crave. They seek to take from their husbands the role of leadership in the family and sometimes withhold sex in order to manipulate. Even worse, many families fall into what I call the Ahab/Jezebel syndrome. Men abdicate their God-designed role of leading, protecting, and providing to their wives who, also abandoning their role as their husbands helper and support (Gen 2:18) grasp and manipulate until they become the leader of a twisted and dysfunctional family. By distorting themselves in

this way they invite the devil into their relationship. The Bible gives us an example when it tells us the story of how King Ahab abdicated his place as leader and let his wife become motivator and director. Jezebel, a master at manipulation and witchcraft, wrapped Ahab around her little finger. That picture is not a pretty one. You will find their sordid story and how God dealt with them in 1 Kings 16:29 – 22:39.

For now, let's continue looking at marriage for what it really is in the ideal. Keep this in mind as well: no amount of sin can obscure God's image in us. He can be seen even in the most dysfunctional of marriages.



WE HAVE BEEN TALKING about the basic relationship between a man and a woman in marriage, but this book is really all about the relationship that exists between the church and the Lord and by extension between every individual Christian and Christ. Ephesians 5:23 says, "*...for the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church.*" Elsewhere the Bible speaks of the church as the bride of the Son (Rev 21:2,9). The relationship between husband and wife, the interaction between the masculine and the feminine, speaks on three different levels of our relationship with Christ. First, we see Christ standing as a loving and

nurturing leader. Second, we see the church (and the individual Christian) responding to His leadership and resting secure in His care. Third, we see how a multiplicity can be a unity. In marriage, in a relationship where two have become one, we catch a glimpse of how the Trinity works.

For example, every man desires for his wife to respond to his leadership. He wants her to grab hold of his goals, thereby making them her goals. He wants her to trust him to make decisions for them as a couple. When she responds to him in that way, he finds himself content, happy, and full of love and appreciation for his wife – his joy is full. Indeed, there is nothing he would not do for her. Therefore, a right-working marriage presents us with a picture, an image, an example, of the joy Christ finds when we respond to His leadership in similar manner. For instance, when the Lord speaks to a church body giving its people direction and outlining His goals for them, and they respond to Him with faith by trusting Him to guide them through the unknown challenges ahead, His heart bursts with joy! When that happens, there is nothing He would not do for His bride. In the same way, when the Lord gives an individual Christian direction and guidance and he/she responds in faith and trust and internalizes Christ's goals for him/her, Jesus' joy is truly made full (John 15:11; 16:24).

Is God awesome or what? He designed the human construct to not only reflect His image, but to stand as an example of how He interacts with His bride, the church. At the very foundation of the world, God wrote analogy into our very natures that show us who He is and how He operates in us. Those metaphors work not only with us as individuals, but at corporate levels within the church as a whole. His creativity and intelligence are boundless! What an awesome God we serve!

As you continue reading this book, keep in mind that our single, greatest purpose in this life is to get to know Him. That purpose trumps evangelism. It trumps Bible study. It is far more important than all the work that we do in our local churches. The great thing is that He made that all-important task of getting to know and understand Him easier by painting pictures of Himself into us.

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1. This imagery of the Son singing creation into existence comes from C.S. Lewis's *The Magician's Nephew* (from his Narnia series of children's books). In that book we see Aslan (an allegorical Jesus) doing the same thing – singing the creation into life.
 2. The Biblical account of God bringing the animals to Adam does not state that He brought them in pairs. That is an assumption on the part of the author.
 3. The above story was a dramatization. For the accurate version of Adam's story read Genesis Chapters 1 and 2.
 4. For this author's favorite cosmology (*cosmology* – an explanation of how God went about creating the universe), please see

Starlight & Time by Dr. Russell Humphreys, Ph.D. This book will give you a good framework from which you can view the wide-angle, infinite-focal-length view of creation given in Genesis Chapter 1.

5. Please see **Appendix A** – Spheres of Authority for a discussion of this topic.
6. Adam was young, but God must have created him with the knowledge and wisdom of an adult. He must have been incredibly intelligent. Consider the sheer number of animal species he chose a unique name for. There are over 2.35 million animal and insect species today. Scientists tell us that, from the fossil record, more species have lived and gone extinct than are alive today. Put those two numbers together and you have a very large number. So, Adam’s grasp of language was so phenomenal that he was able to come up with a unique name for each of those millions of species. That’s a mind-boggling impossibility for us to wrap our brains around, but it makes more sense when you consider that Adam probably used 100% of his brain’s capabilities. Most estimates I’ve heard place modern man’s brain capacity usage at 10% or less. Adam was a pretty awesome guy!
7. While the roots of the homosexual lifestyle are indeed lust, control and extreme rebellion, my statement here is an oversimplification of those forces that move a man or woman into a gay lifestyle. One cannot stop at what I have said here and use it to condemn all gay people. More understanding is required, but that is not the focus of this book and this is not the place to discuss it.
8. A large portion of the church in America has chosen to compromise with the gay lifestyle advocates. Those who haven’t made that compromise are finding themselves increasingly isolated and persecuted. This is all very similar to what happened in China when the communists took over that nation. The Three-Self church compromised with the anti-God government and largely ceased teaching the truth of Jesus and the salvation He wrought for us. In large measure they embraced apostasy, leaving their Lord. In contrast, the Chinese house church movement, heavily persecuted, refused to compromise and has been bringing the Chinese people to Christ by the millions.

» Interlude: Little Things «



Life is like a river bottom. On every river bottom, small pebbles fill the gaps between the large boulders and stones. Living things thrive in the cracks and holes between those pebbles. Sure, life can be found under the large stones too, but it's the small pebbles that make a river's life rich.

So, it is with us. For instance, my father loved my mom's chocolate cake. He also loved his ice cream, and the two always seem to find their way together onto his plate. He had this way of always wanting them to come out even, so if he ran out of ice cream first, he would ask for another scoop, and if the cake disappeared too quickly, why another piece needed to take its place on his plate! Funny how that cycle seemed to be endless. I don't suppose my dad was the first to perfect the ice

cream/chocolate cake cycle, but this little way of his enriched my life. It was a piece of life that lived between the pebbles of my little boy's river bottom. I could tell you story after story of how the little things of my growing up life enriched me and filled my life with good things. Things like finding where in the barn the mother cat had hidden her kittens, walking with Dad across the meadows discussing the grass, stopping the tractor to move a nest of duck eggs to a safe place, or coming in all hot and tired from the field to find Mom's fresh-baked bread and strawberry jam waiting on the table – the list seems endless!

There were also plenty of nasty, jagged stones in my river bottom. The bullies at school were really big rocks for me. Later, as I got older, I had to choose a career, go to college, and find a job. Those three stones may not have nasty, but they were big, heavy, and difficult. Yet even then, the richness of life for me was found in the pebbles, the little things of everyday existence. I find God in those tiny spaces. Even when life is so hard that I want to give up, I can see Him in the little things. I see Him in the small pebbles, moments like eating Ruth's strawberry freezer jam (it's even better than Mom's!) In the little joys of life, I touch the fringe of *His* joy, and my joy is made full.

Ruth and I have found that this truth, that the richness of life is found in the little things, is even more true as

we get older, and our decades together increase. Our joy is found in “doing life” together. Whether it’s doing the “Walmart Challenge” as we shop for the necessities of life or sharing a picnic in the car because the yellow jackets were too thick around the picnic table. We do those little things together, and they enrich us. We touch God in those moments, and each pebble He gives us is covered with rich life.

If all we had in our river bottom were large stones, life would be arduous, even bitter. The finance stone is always present. The unemployment stone has sharp, cutting edges. The get-along-with-your-boss stone might be sharp and rough, or it might have smooth edges, but it almost always is big and tough to deal with. Thank God for the pebbles in between that make the river bottom easier to walk on.

Look closely at the pebbles in your river bottom! Sometimes, when you look really close at those pebbles that fill the gaps between the stones of your river bottom, sometimes one of them turns out to be gold!