

Your Genesis 2:24 Model for Growing in Biblical Intimacy

Imagine that Friday in the Garden of Eden. Adam wakes from his God-induced sleep missing a rib, and before him is a sight more captivating than anything his newly-created eyes have yet seen: Woman! “Therefore a man will leave his father and his mother and be joined to his wife, and they will become one flesh” (Gen. 2:24). How can you grow a one-flesh marriage?

If you’re a woman, you might think of a long evening looking into each other’s eyes, sharing your hearts, holding each other close. And sex—yes, that too, sometimes. If you’re a man, you might think of having a woman to call your own, someone to embrace and satisfy your sexual desires at all times. And talking—OK, that too, when necessary.

In our world, multiple sexual partners before (or during) marriage, pornography, affairs, domestic violence, emotional and sexual exploitation, domination and control, fear, and so much more complicate perhaps a majority of intimate relationships. Desires and needs are not met. Divorce is common. It’s no wonder many wonder whether marriage is worth it.

Let’s acknowledge, mourn and work with God to heal the brokenness surrounding marriage, sex and personal relationships that sin has brought into our world. But rather than settling for crumbs of satisfaction that end up causing more pain, let’s concentrate right now on what God’s intention for intimacy was and is all about. What is the “one flesh” that God intended?

Real Intimacy

True God-ordained intimacy means more than taking the clothes

off your body; it means taking the clothes off your mind and heart also. It means no barriers between. Intimacy between husband and wife is intended to mirror the intimacy experienced between the members of the Godhead—Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

For us broken human beings, that seems impossible. For many or most of us, our experience has shown that letting down walls means getting hurt. Love is a risk.

And yet marriage as God intended it is exactly the place where letting down those walls becomes possible. Marriage is to be a place where you are known for who you are—and loved anyway. It's where you know your spouse deeply, warts and glory and all—and love them anyway. It's where both of you have your wounds opened, seen, cleansed and healed. It's where you learn to love well.

Sex Is Spiritual

Scripture doesn't compartmentalize sex the way many of us do. Biblically, sex is not the gateway to redemption, as some pagan religions with their temple prostitutes envisioned. Neither is it the evil gateway to hell that some (both ancient and contemporary) have portrayed it to be. Sex is simply part of the integrated way in which God created human beings, and it has spiritual implications.

As such, sex has been distorted by sin. And sex is also part of the redemption available to us through Jesus. As with our physical health, our thoughts and emotions, and our deepest spiritual selves, our sexuality is part of our creation that sin broke and that God wants to, can and does heal.

The truth that sex is definitely part of "one flesh" is affirmed by Paul: "Do you not know that he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her in body? For it is said, 'The two will become one flesh'" (1 Cor. 6:16, ESV). As a medical doctor, I often seen the painful reality that when you

have sex, you're having sex with every person your partner has previously had sex with.

Let me hasten to add that in Christ, healing and redemption are completely possible. Two virgins getting married does not guarantee a healthy sex life. And whether or not you or your spouse has been previously sexually broken or "acted out" sexually, you can build a healthy marriage with God as both your foundation and the glue holding you together.

This truth is also why breakups and divorce are so painful. A sexual relationship with someone, married or not, creates a dimension of "one flesh" that can only cause ripping and tearing if that relationship ends. Some, especially women, know this and use sex to "catch" a man. Don't do that! It will backfire and cause more pain.

Back to the good, one-flesh marriage God intended.

Growing in One Flesh

For Adam and Eve in the garden, becoming one flesh was a joyful exploration, a journey of discovery, a learning about intimacy and satisfaction physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually, without any baggage or barriers. It was beautiful.

For you and me, broken humans as we are, becoming one flesh will not be unmitigated joy and ecstasy. Both you and your spouse come with spines that cause each other pain when you get close. The journey of becoming one means exposing and breaking off those spines as you learn to love well.

Here are a few actions you can take to grow in "one flesh" with your spouse.

1. **Take your clothes off.** That means sex. You may need to have the sex talk with your spouse frequently. It also means talking-about everything. That's taking the

clothes off your heart and mind. Many couples need help to learn healthy communication. Trust is built over time. It can be broken, and it can be rebuilt. Invest in these parts of your marriage.

2. **Commit to change.** You will not be able to have a healthy one-flesh marriage by remaining the same as you were when single. You *will* have to change. Marriage is one of the ways God uses to show you what parts of you need to be healed and transformed. Welcome that exposure, as difficult as it may seem. Let God use your marriage to transform you.
3. **Stay on your knees.** The enemy knows how powerful a godly, growing one-flesh marriage can be against his kingdom of darkness, and he will use every means available to drive you apart. Determine daily to not let that happen. The only way you can remain safe is to stay on your knees. Pray for your own heart, for your spouse and for your marriage.

We may often dismiss the possibility of a one-flesh marriage because it seems so difficult, even impossible. Don't give up. God wants to develop your marriage into a demonstration of His grace that will amaze you.

Your Turn: *How "one flesh" is your own marriage? Where do you need to invest energy now in seeking the transformation God wants to bring in your marriage? Leave a comment below. {eoa}*

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