

## **Leadership And Covenants (Part Six)**

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In the previous issue, we ended with a discussion on God's creation of Eve as Adam's companion. God clearly created her, not to be a mere companion, but Adam's wife, a fact that the man recognizes quickly, saying in Genesis 2:23-24, "'This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called woman, because she was taken out of man.' Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh." God's overriding reason for creating Eve was to establish marriage and family life, enabling the human population to grow and to provide a stable and positive environment for the rearing of children.

Marriage has served mankind well. It serves both God and mankind very well as long as spouses focus their lives on conforming to God's will and have a living, growing relationship with Him. Sound and healthy morality within a family and nation rises from one's relationship with God. Sadly, such is not the case in our nations today.

In this we see how morality can be radically undercut: by subtly undermining a person's relationship with God. As we saw last time, in large part this has been accomplished. As an institution, marriage has been severely damaged, and many of our fellow citizens have abandoned God and His ways. Human carnality, always an enemy of God, brazenly flaunts itself against the Almighty, and marriage and family seem to be its most targeted victims.

Though it has been slow in happening—in fact, over a few generations—Americans in growing numbers are becoming alarmed at what has developed in our culture. We see the alarm in the angry rhetoric of the political campaign, as citizens take sides on virtually every political and moral issue. Other dramatic evidence comes to light in American court cases in which citizens are called to account for their obedience to Christian moral standards. The biblically obedient people almost always lose their cases, indicating the judges are already swayed against God's standards. It is our hope that it is not too late for our society to turn around.

The unseen author of the radical decline in morality is Satan. He is the arch-conspirator who has deceived the whole world (Revelation 12:9). He lures people into evil through enticements—always anti-God—that appeal to the carnal nature. These self-serving enticements spawn division, and division brings Satan satisfaction because division destroys. God Himself names the adversary "Destroyer" in Revelation 9:11.

### **Achieving Oneness**

In the New King James Version, Genesis 2:24 reads that the man and woman are to "be joined to" each other, while the King James Version uses the more traditional term, "cleave to." These phrases are important because in them God is signaling to those studying into His purpose for marriage that achieving the oneness He desires in marriage is difficult. If the couple is not truly cleaving to one another, the marriage will not produce good fruit, and the two may slip apart from each other rather than grow ever closer.

The Hebrew term underlying “join” or “cleave,” *dâbaq*, is a strong word that has the literal sense of two being held together by force, as when one person captures another. It has a figurative sense of being “glued to” through positive family care. In a marriage-and-family situation, it portrays a bond of consistent, sacrificial loyalty and devotion.

The word appears in Ruth 1:14: “Then they lifted up their voices and wept again; and Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clung [*dâbaq*]to her.” The account shows Orpah remaining in the nation of her birth, distancing herself from Naomi, but Ruth, who clings to her mother-in-law, remains with her and accompanies her to Judea. What God is looking for from each partner in a marriage, then, is a voluntary, sacrificial giving of themselves in loyalty, devotion, and affection so oneness is produced.

The loving efforts toward oneness in marriage are types of what is needed for the Christian to become one spiritually with the Father and the Son. Both partners in a marriage are to give themselves completely to achieving a human type of the oneness that the Father and Son exhibit in Their relationship. God created this process as a deliberate parallel in terms of our overall goals in life. The goals in both a physical marriage and a spiritual relationship with God are in principle essentially the same—achieving oneness. Some individual characteristics are different, of course, because one goal is physical and the other is spiritual.

The idea of marriage partners becoming one flesh feeds into the spiritual reality of our Husband to be, Jesus Christ, and what He is working toward. Jesus prays in John 17:20-23:

I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me.

These attitudes and actions have impact beyond an immediate family situation. As God unveils His truths through the beginning portions of the Bible, the reader is led to the logical conclusion that, as the populations increased and communities were formed, community needs were filled through family organization. There were no governments, churches, schools, businesses, etc., before marriage and family. Those other institutions took a long time to form. The meeting of community needs arose from the patterns in use within the organized family that the Creator God ordained.

God’s creation of marriage and family provided the model. Following the pattern of the father’s authority in the family, community government formed. The same basic process was involved in the founding of schools beyond the children’s most basic needs. Thus, colleges, universities, and schools of all kinds were developed to meet the needs of communities. One would be hard pressed to name any community institution that does not have some direct or indirect connection to meeting family needs.

### **Humanists Achieve Shifts in Emphasis**

In I Corinthians 11:3, the apostle Paul states an order of authority established by God that we need to understand: “But I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God.” By means of the parallel between deity and mankind in God’s order,

Paul shows that a wife's submission to her husband in marriage does not imply her inferiority. How? In the parallel, Christ is not inferior to God the Father. All that God's order defines in this case is subordination. As the Father and Son are equally divine, the husband and wife are equally human. Even as the Father and Son have different roles in their relationship, so do the husband and wife in God's purposes for the family.

Thus, in terms of government, there is a distinctive and deliberate similarity between the two organizations. Government is merely a system of operation, a means of directing and controlling so that the purposes of an organization are achieved. Though the Son is one with the Father, being of the same substance, power, and glory, He nonetheless voluntarily submits to the Father. In human marriage, husband and wife, like the Father and Son, are also essentially the same. In marriage, the submission of a woman to her husband is also intended to be voluntary.

It is at this juncture that Satan, using men he controls through subtle deceits, has dealt a devastating blow to our culture.

"Humanist" is a descriptor given to those who have abandoned a belief in God and religion. Some people refer to such people as "secularists." Most of them claim atheism. Many of them are university-educated and earn salaries that place them in upper-middle-class income brackets. They also tend to be in positions of authority in government, business, education, and entertainment. Their reputations in the community often carry a great deal of influence. However, having abandoned God, their true spirituality and morality are terribly skewed, making their influence anti-God.

Satan, using the humanists' influence, has convinced a large percentage of the public that sex and love are the same, a major departure from what was once generally believed in American culture. Sex and love are not equivalent. Love is so much greater in importance than sex that there is no adequate comparison. Humanists have also managed to convince many that everything is morally irrelevant. This, too, is untrue, but many fail to think it through. In reality, moral irrelevance actually drives marriages apart.

In God's standard of morality, He is quite specific. For example, within marriage, sex is totally, completely, and absolutely limited to one's legal partner in that specific marriage. There are no exceptions. We find another restriction in I Corinthians 7:3-4:

Let the husband render to his wife the affection due her, and likewise also the wife to her husband. The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does.  
And likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does.

Even before marriage, both the man's and the woman's body belongs to their future spouses. Their bodies are not theirs to "just play around with." This teaches us that fornication contributes to weakening a marriage that has not even occurred yet! Each partner in a marriage belongs to the other even before the marriage takes place. It is therefore each person's responsibility to preserve the body's sexual purity for the one he or she will marry.

### **A Three-Pronged Attack**

Satan has devised a three-pronged attack against the American culture involving the persuasion of Americans to disregard God's marriage covenant with the intent of confusing or even obliterating human reliance on God's ways. Because mankind's carnality is wide open to the Devil's deceits, he

has achieved an incredibly high rate of success. He began laying the foundation for these end-time attacks long before this present time.

The most important of the three prongs is destroying faith in the sovereign Creator God's existence and the guidance given in His Word. Humanists insist that God does not exist and that humanity is uncreated, and therefore the Bible is no more authoritative than any other manmade work. They say, "Everything we see simply came into being through natural, resident forces."

Without belief in God, there is no supreme, authoritative voice to provide a true foundation for moral and spiritual behavior. Everyone's guess as to what is right or wrong is as good as anyone else's. With this mindset, people gradually come to believe that they have the freedom to engage in any behavior they choose for themselves. In effect, they make themselves gods. This idea has not yet reached the saturation point in this culture, but the times are such that those who have a strong belief in God are about to be overwhelmed by the sheer number of people the humanists have already convinced.

Humanists are easily identified: They tend to gravitate to the liberal teaching staffs of universities. They find places in the entertainment industry, and play an influential role in the liberal media. They stand on the front lines of the protest movements for feminism, homosexuality, transgenderism, and polygamy. Each group has organized to put pressure on the courts and politicians to bend to their will or lose their votes and support.

These areas are only the most obvious. They are supported by huge numbers of people who, though not directly and actively involved in these sins, unwittingly support them as fellow-travelers. The latter seem unable to connect the dots as to what this humanist immorality is producing, having no understanding that this unrighteous conduct can only end in disaster when God decides to move against it.

### **The Second Prong**

The second prong is more directly against marriage itself. In our time, the institution is under attack from every side by the rank immorality—nearing outright hedonism—that is incessantly promoted from within the culture. Hedonists falsely proclaim that life's main purpose is pleasure. In truth, its purpose is to please the God who created and gave us life in the first place.

But the inducement that "everybody's doing it" puts a person under constant pressure to give in and go along with whatever immorality is in vogue. This pressure to conform is destructively wearying, making it increasingly more difficult to resist the culture's siren song.

Even the churches, especially the large, liberal, Protestant organizations, have gradually left God and the Bible in favor of their homemade liberalism. They have modified their doctrinal positions to accommodate the demands of humanists and the devolving mores of society. As the sexual revolution took hold in the middle of the last century, they called it the "New Morality," justifying the changes by saying that these relaxations were fine as long as nobody got hurt. The major flaw in their reasoning is that people who commit such sins cannot truly grasp the results of their sins; they cannot look far enough down the road with any certainty nor pinpoint exactly how the penalties for their sins will fall.

Satan's attack has been successful. Statistics reveal that adultery and fornication—most especially fornication—are so widespread that, in some places in America, more babies are born out of wedlock than in. Adultery has moved beyond merely being acceptable; it is even being promoted as a means to save failing marriages! Doing so is nothing more than committing more sin to save a person from his or her previously committed sins. It is like spending more money to save oneself from going bankrupt.

### **The Third Prong**

A third front in Satan's attack against marriage has been to marshal his followers to persuade each state's governing authorities to simplify and ease the process to obtain a divorce. This has been done chiefly through no-fault divorce laws. Being granted a divorce by the state used to be a difficult endeavor.

Perhaps the following true example will help us understand why getting a divorce is so much easier today. It exposes the political influences that Satan has used in his attack on marriage.

Karl Marx writes in his *Communist Manifesto* that, for communism to work, Christianity and marriage must be destroyed. Shortly after the Bolshevik Revolution secured governance over Russia, the Party's leadership made it a national law that all one had to do to obtain a divorce in the Soviet Union was to mail a signed postcard to the appropriate department stating, "I, so-and-so, am divorcing so-and-so." The divorcing party did not even have to inform the one they were divorcing!

Why did the communists make it so easy?

Communist Party intellectuals discovered that Christian principles working within marriage, which features loyalty to God and to a mate, were a strong barrier to persuading a person to become a communist. Their experience showed them that they needed another avenue of influence to break the hold Christianity and marriage had on people's rejection of communism. No-fault divorce to end a marriage was an easy first step. As a bonus, it freed a woman from the obligations of a home, allowing her to enter the workforce much more cheaply than a man could. In reality, however, it was a step into slavery. We are witnessing history being repeated in America, as we are being driven into anti-God socialism.

Another attack on marriage and family is baby-murder on demand, commonly called abortion. Even major church organizations have become so persuaded by the "everybody's doing it" mantra and by their fear of losing members that they cannot find the faith or courage to bring themselves to call abortion what it is: the murder of the weakest and most vulnerable of humans.

State-sponsored abortion is now so easily obtained that, not only does the father of the child not have to give his permission for the murder to be committed, but in some states an underage girl does not have to inform her parents that she will be participating in the murder. The abortionist, then, has more power than parental authority or faith in God. Abortion has become so common that it will soon be the chief means of controlling family size.

In authorizing the shift toward hedonism, combined with allowing divorce to be as easily obtained as writing a check and permitting the lives of the most vulnerable members of humanity to be snuffed out based on a woman's mere comfort or pleasure, the state has become the major, visible enemy of

the kind of marriage and family our Creator intended. The state is the god men have created to satisfy their desires for power. It is no wonder that welfare is nearly breaking the economies of many American states.

### **Love, Sex, and Oneness**

Because it is so important to our well-being, we must understand at the very least why God entered into the creation of the universe, of this magnificent environment we call earth, and then of mankind. Genesis 1:26 gives us this basic reason when God states, “Let Us create man in Our image, according to Our likeness.” Without going into details, the Bible is showing that God is recreating or reproducing Himself.

It is necessary to add another factor to this that a converted person learns as he comes to know God from within a relationship with Him. God loves to bestow upon others pleasures of the same kinds and qualities that He enjoys, pleasures that have no painful repercussions. I once heard a man exclaim, “Fun is fun when it is always fun.” God desires others to have that kind and level of pleasure, and we can when we share His quality of life.

Genesis 1:31 says, “Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good.” Does it not give us a sense of pleasure to accomplish something good? Where do we think this gift of experiencing pleasure from accomplishment came from? It was a gift created within us by God as He created us in His image. He desires that we experience these pleasures as He does.

Throughout the Bible, God teaches us by giving historical examples and commands so we can build a foundation for understanding why we should do in a certain way what He instructs us to do. His purpose is to produce proofs and therefore encouragement that His way brings the pleasures that He desires we have. God is increasing His Family Kingdom, and He has willed that we participate in this project. If we desire these pleasures, perhaps most especially from marriage, it builds confidence in us that it is our responsibility to please God in all we do.

It is right here, though, that Satan’s world has put mankind on a collision course with disaster. In today’s Western world, Satan has managed to deceive a huge percentage of people, perhaps especially through movies and novels, that a successful marriage—oneness—is achieved through the sexual relationship. But marriage is God’s creation, and He did not create marriage and its intended oneness to be built on sex. An individual should not attempt to do so, for his marriage will not be as successful as it would be under God’s purposes. He intends that marriage be built on love. Sex and love are not co-equal; they are not one in value to a marriage.

In I John 5:3, *love* is clearly defined, “For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments.” *Sex* has no such specific definition anywhere in God’s Word. “Keep” implies the activity of guarding and doing so by means of our conduct. Thus, the Bible defines love as an *action* not a feeling. Actions also include right attitudes. Feelings are certainly involved, but they are not the primary element that makes love the positive influence that God intends.

A vivid example is rape, which involves a sexual action, but it is most certainly a forcible attack against another. It cannot be considered an affectionate action in any way. It is the forceful taking of a momentary pleasure while simultaneously injuring another. Such a vile act hardly builds oneness, by any stretch of the imagination.

Love is outgoing concern, behavior that seeks the good of the one loved at least equal to the love of self. It is this element that greatly facilitates husband and wife becoming one in all aspects of life. If a marriage is built around sex, it may indeed last, but it will probably lead to intense emotional frustration and may even produce adultery by one or the other or both. Sex was not created for that purpose. It is one among many expressions of love, one fully intended by God to be expressed—but only within marriage. It is an intimacy reserved only for the one other person sharing the relationship.

By “commandments,” I John 5:3 means all of God’s commandments that bear on what love is, not merely the Ten Commandments. Major adjustments may have to be made if a marriage is going to produce the pleasures God intends. God’s intention is achieved by cultivating the lawful interests and aspirations of both to each other. This is not easy to do because the carnality within us asserts our self-interests so quickly and sometimes so strongly.

This nation is experiencing the tragic results of Satan’s evil attentions. If changes were made to correct things at the same pace God permitted Satan to bring this cancerous deterioration on us, there would be no hope for a turnaround in the lives of all but the youngest now living. We have just about reached a point in our culture similar to the period just before the Flood (Genesis 6). God Himself had to solve those issues by wiping everything clean and starting all over again. Jesus’ Olivet Prophecy guarantees a reversal that does not reach the magnitude of the Flood’s devastation. But happily, at the same time, it will vastly alter people’s conduct through the best government available, that of Jesus Christ.

### **Sin Destroys Paradise**

Those who believe God and study the Bible should have no doubt in their minds that He created marriage for His pleasure and glory. Likewise, they should not doubt that He gave it to mankind, not only as a wonderful gift, but also as a major vehicle of preparation for His Kingdom. Despite the present state of instability in marriage, believers should also understand that He has not failed in His purpose, nor has marriage.

A Solomonic insight, recorded in Ecclesiastes 7:29, helps to clarify what has happened. “Truly, this only have I found: That God created man upright, but they have sought out many schemes.” Mankind’s failure to believe God and therefore to use this wonderful gift rightly is what has created the instability and apparent failure of marriage. Bluntly stated, sin, committed at marriage’s inception and continued to this day, has severely marred its godly intent.

Immediately after Adam’s comment on his and Eve’s oneness, Moses reports, “And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed” (Genesis 2:25). They were literally naked. Once they sinned, though, they immediately looked for something to cover themselves. God draws attention to it to focus our attention on mankind’s failure.

“Naked” is used as a descriptor 104 times. Depending on the context, it can indicate innocence, purity, defenselessness, vulnerability, helplessness, humiliation, shame, guilt, and judgment. At times, it may indicate several of these qualities within a single context, so the context must be read carefully to grasp how it is specifically being used.

In Genesis 2:25, it indicates good qualities: purity of mind and conduct, innocence, and perhaps also vulnerability. God is setting up the impending radical difference that was the fruit of destruction by sin, using the term to help illustrate the depth of their fall through the sins that followed.

Overall, God's instruction in this context smashes the false notion that many have: that sin is of minor concern as long as nobody gets hurt. How? This episode teaches there is no such thing as a sin that does no damage. It *always* destroys, and sometimes in multiple areas of life. The damage may not visibly or immediately appear to the perpetrators.

Genesis 3:7 is revealing in terms of what happened immediately after their sins: "Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings." The earlier context offers no indication that their being naked before God and each other had caused even the slightest embarrassment. Once they sinned, they not only realized their nakedness, but with the realization they also felt a sense of shame. They knew they had committed something evil—sin. If there was no shame, why would they seek to cover themselves? The fruit of sin was beginning to grow.

So they hastily searched out the best covering they could find, but what they used—fig leaves—was in reality totally inadequate. The nakedness was not the problem, the sins were. That was not all they did:

And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. Then the Lord God called to Adam and said to him, "Where are you?" So he said, "I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself." And He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you that you should not eat?" (Genesis 3:8-11)

That is very clear. So what was the damage tally from this one event?

First, their sin immediately changed their hearts. They did not have to wait around for somebody to be injured or offended. Sin instantly altered the purity of their thoughts, as shown by the actions they took to "protect" themselves.

Second, their sins damaged their relationship with God. The wrong kind of fear entered the relationship and began separating Him from them. God did not change, of course, but sin immediately marred the quality of the relationship.

Third, their sins distorted their relationship with each other. They could no longer look at each other with the pure innocence they had before, having shared in an evil deed and accused each other and Satan.

Fourth, their sins altered their views about themselves. They knew in their heart of hearts that they had done an evil thing. Their reaction was to justify themselves and shift the blame to others.

Adam and Eve's choice was costly. Their disloyalty exposed their proclivity to sin on their very first exposure to temptation, costing them a relationship with God. They established a sinful pattern of life, as shown in the fruit of their marriage, which is evident in the sinful lives of their children. Finally, their sins cost them the blessing of living in the Garden of Eden.

It was not an encouraging beginning for humanity. Yet, because God is patiently merciful, He has called us, revealed His purpose to us, and given us His Spirit. We now have the fabulous opportunity to learn from their examples and use His gifts in a righteous way.

Though sins are committed by insignificant people in seemingly inconsequential circumstances, they always have effects beyond the time, place, and perpetrators of the transgression. A major lesson we must learn from this is that we do not live in a vacuum; this creation's Creator is always overseeing it and judging. More to follow.