

Friendship and Marriage – Genesis 2:18-25

Verse 18, *“It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him,”* is one that we have often read and reflected on. However, we may fail to notice that this was the first and only instance where God was not fully pleased with His creation. Over 6 days, God created many things and repeatedly concluded His work with *“It was good”*. It was only when Adam was created that God said *“it is not good”*. Why is that the case? In Genesis 1:26-28, God says *“Let us make man in our image...”*. As an image of God, man cannot live alone as it is not an accurate representation of the nature of the triune God. Additionally God says (v28), *“Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”* This is a task that cannot be fulfilled if man was to be alone.

It is clear that having a close relationship with one another is essential for a human being. Even before the fall, when Adam still had a perfect relationship with God, he needed a companion. We acknowledge that having a relationship with God is of utmost importance, but God himself declared that it was not enough for man to live in isolation, without a relation with another human being. Thus, God created Eve, a helper fit for Adam. The word *‘helper’* in the original Hebrew language refers to a helper, companion, and friend. Eve was not just a wife, but also a friend. What does it mean to be a friend?

In the book of Proverbs, friendships are characterised by their consistent love (17:17), shown through sincerity and truthfulness in speaking the truth even if it hurts (27:5-6, 9), and common passion. A common passion may be identical or complementary. C.S. Lewis once articulated that lovers look at each other, but friends look at the same object side by side. Thus, friendships require an object of focus - a common passion. No friendship can arise without it, the person alone is not enough.

For Christians, the common passion that God gives is to enjoy and glorify Him forever. One of the key components of this is to become more like Christ through progressive sanctification. True friendship cannot exist with someone of a different faith, as is the case with marriage. After we have become a new creation, our goal and passion should be to become more like Christ. If your friend does not have the same goal, they cannot be a true friend, husband, or wife. In our journey to be more like Christ, our friend in faith is important and is key to our spiritual growth. This principle applies to marriage as well.

- 1. The power of truth.** In marriage, you will find out everything about your spouse. The question is, after everything has been disclosed, what will your spouse see? Will they meet a coward? Someone who is selfish? A lazy person? A perfectionist? What weaknesses and sins would they find? When others rebuke us, we may get defensive. However, there is no room for that in marriage as your spouse knows the truth and will continue to follow up on those weaknesses and sins. No one else can do this other than our spouse. Although it will hurt, we must be teachable and repent. Without change, our sins will continue to hurt our spouse who needs to bear it all. This is a form of grace that God has given as part of our sanctification process. Let us give this power of truth to our spouse, or to a certain extent, to a friend, so that they can be our mirror and reveal the sins in our hearts.
- 2. The power of love.** Anyone entering into a marriage carries a baggage from their past filled with both successes and failures. Although the negative tend to overweigh the positive, marriage gives an opportunity to change and see ourselves differently. This is because despite all the baggage we carry, the perception of our spouse is more important. If your spouse thinks you are good looking, it does not matter if the whole world says you are ugly. The honest support of a spouse has the power to heal old wounds. The love of God, who has created and loved us, is just as important. Once we receive and respond to God’s love, our core identity begins to change. The love of God and the love

of others work together in synergy to shape us. Without this power of love, the power of truth will not be edifying for our spouse or friends, but instead cause hurt and destruction. Without the power of truth, our love will not be genuine but be merely an illusion.

- 3. The power of grace.** Balancing the power of truth and the power of love is difficult and requires the help of the power of grace. To save us sinners, God was willing to send his own son into this world, to die and save us. He knew it was the only way we could be freed from our sin, and was willing to pay the ultimate price with His own life. Experiencing this grace should empower us to make known the truth in love. When we see the sin of our friends and our spouse, the power of grace will motivate you to continue loving them, just as God had chosen to love us despite our weaknesses and sins against Him. Without the power of grace, we cannot love anyone.