

God's Sneaky Way to Get a Person Crucified

Matthew 19:1-12

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During the late '70's, at the age of 16, I experienced some chest pains. Doctors took x-rays and discovered that my heart was a trophy room (the kind that big game hunters have). My ego was sitting in the middle of this trophy room in a big stuffed chair, humming the 007 theme some and smoking a pipe.

Over the fire place, stuffed and mounted was the head and shoulders of Karen McGuinly. Next to me, Becky Drucker had been made into a beautiful floor lamp. You see, I had kissed her for 30 minutes straight. I know because I watched the clock in the bank building across the street so I could tell my friends.

There were a few other trophies like these. I had won their affections, consumed and conquered them. I was at least a nominal Christian, so that didn't mean sexual conquest, so much as they had fallen for me, liked me, at least a little.

Yet once I thought I owned them, they lost their appeal. Once I possessed the fruit, it no longer tasted sweet for it wasn't really the fruit I craved, but the conquest of it to make a better me, to fill my trophy room, and to pad my resume. Yet if they fell for me, they weren't so valuable to me for they fell for *me*.

So I'd break it off, and claim them as trophies, and hunt for more to try to fill me, complete me, with something more than me.

My prize trophy was Lisa because she had a cheerleader uniform, and because she dumped me. I declared a mutual dumping right afterward, but I knew the truth deep down inside. And so I prized her above all others because I knew that she was too good for me. If I had ‘em, I didn’t want ‘em, and if I wanted ‘em, I couldn’t have ‘em.

Currently, I was dating this girl. She was like that song:

“Chantilly lace and a pretty face
a pony tail, hangin’ down...”

She was gorgeous, until, of course, I thought I had conquered her, captured her, consumed her, and then the song would stop. Then I’d call it off, and she’d say, “Okay.” Then the song would start again,

“Chantilly lace and a pretty face...”

and I’d hunt her again. I’d go trophy hunting. But a trophy is a thing, and to bag a trophy is to turn a person into a thing, and things leave you lonely.

And so, it really wasn’t them mounted and stuffed on the wall of my heart, just my image of them. In fact, I really didn’t know any of them, and they didn’t know me. They could only know the image I projected at them... easy going, confident guy on the swim team.

I couldn’t let them see that deep down inside I was totally stressed, and insecure, and really lonely. Almost every night I’d pray that this new girl I was dating, named Susan Coleman, would not come to any swim meets because I always came in last.

I was an actor, impersonating my image of myself, trying to impress other actors, impersonating their image of themselves. No self could ever afford to truly be naked in front of another self in any serious emotional and spiritual sort of way. You see it really does make sense to play “hard to get.” It’s just that no one can afford to be gotten.

I wanted to get, but I was scared to death to be gotten. My trophy room was all about me, but the “me” was a fake, and terribly scared, and really lonely.

In scripture, the first thing that God declared “not good” after declaring all creation “good,” and before the fall... God declared “it is not good that man should be alone.”

Well, that explained the chest pain.

Now, of course, you know my trophy room story is an exaggeration, and yet, of course, it’s not. So singles bars and swingers resorts are packed with lonely people, and fake people, and very few real people.

And the more naked they get physically, the less naked they are emotionally and spiritually. Harlots and their Johns develop the hardest hearts and least naked souls. Many marriages are much the same. Romance novels, pornography, violated intimacy—hearts sealed off. Just roommates. And if they have sex, it’s not really with each other. And divorce is rampant in our land.

God hates divorce!

But did you know God was divorced?

Jeremiah 3:8, “I gave faithless Israel her certificate of divorce and sent her away because of all her adulteries.” God divorced her, or maybe more accurately, she divorced him.

In the Old Testament, the punishment for pre-marital sex was marital sex, as if sex somehow ratified the

marriage covenant, and two became one. And so extra-marital sex somehow broke the marriage covenant.

Therefore, God just granted Israel her papers, let her go. Yet Jeremiah prophesies, one day, God would bring her back to Zion; one day, God would bring her home. Isaiah basically prophesies the same thing and so does Ezekiel and Hosea. Isaiah tells how it will happen.

In Isaiah 49-56, Isaiah prophesies a coming servant king, a comforter or helper who suffers death for the sins of Israel and then all at once, Isaiah cries,

Sing, O barren one, who did not bear; break forth into singing and cry aloud, you who have not been in travail! For the children of the desolate one will be more than the children of her that is married... for your Master is your husband.

Well, in the middle of this in chapter 50, verse 1, it's like this suffering Servant, Savior, Redeemer, Helper, King comes to Judea. And the Lord says, "Where is your mother's bill of divorce? Is my hand too short to redeem?" She divorced Him, and if He divorced her, He was still her husband, and He would not forsake her.

Well, anyway, that's all just kind of interesting in light of our text for today, what we started preaching on last week. Matthew, chapter 19:

Now when Jesus had finished these sayings, he went away from Galilee and entered the region of Judea beyond the Jordan [literally, "across the Jordan"]; and large crowds followed him, and he healed them there. And

Pharisees came up to him and tested him [or tempted him] by asking, “Is it lawful to divorce one’s wife for any cause?” He answered, “Have you not read that he who made them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’? So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, [literally “yoked together”] let not man put asunder.”

They ask Him about the law, and He reminds them of The Story: In the beginning, God said Adam needed a helper, and Adam couldn’t see a helper. Even though we know now, “The Lord is our helper,” and “Jesus is our Groom.”

So God put Adam to sleep, as if in death, and took a rib from his side. His body broken and blood shed... just about the same place where a Roman Centurion thrust a spear into Jesus’ side after He died on the cross—the cross where we are made in His image, the image of the last Adam, Christ Jesus.

Well anyway, God takes Adam’s rib and makes Eve. So man, Adam, is made male and female in God’s image. They are helpers to each other, completing each other in God’s image. And when they do, the two become one flesh, and they bear fruit. (They’re yoked together like oxen plowing the soil, bearing fruit.) The fruit is life, sometimes called “babies.”

They fulfill God’s first commandment to “be fruitful and multiply,” creating life in His image by surrendering their nakedness to each other in ecstasy.

But, as you know, Eve listens to a snake, and Adam is with her. God had told Adam about the tree before Eve was made. But Eve doesn't receive the word of Adam and believe. She trusts the advice of the snake and tries to complete herself by consuming the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

You know, Christ is the ultimate Adam,
and we're all Eve, His wayward bride.

Rather than knowing the good, Eve wants the knowledge of the good, to conquer the good. So rather than knowing Adam in ecstasy and creating the fruit of life, she consumes the fruit, and Adam consumes the fruit with her.

Instead of creators, they are consumers.

Immediately, Adam and Eve cover their private parts. I think they're worried that they might just consume each other.

They cover that part that connects their hearts so they're not alone.

They cover that place where they complete each other in the image of God and bear fruit, that is life.

They cover their nakedness in shame.

They hide their parts from each other, and they hide their entire beings from the Lord.

They're each alone in a trophy room full of dead and spoiling fruit... pretty poor helpers one to another.

Well, God finds them; He is our helper. He speaks a curse that includes a promise. And then, tragically, the first recorded death in scripture occurs. God takes an animal, breaks it, sheds its blood, then cuts the skin from the animal and covers their naked shame.

I think the animal was a lamb.

Many theologians say that animal's death was the first sign of the covenant which God spoke on that very day, saying, "One day the seed of the woman will crush the head of the snake, even as the snake crushes the heel of that seed—the promised seed."

Well, from that point, scripture is the story of God redeeming His people, but also the story of God creating His people in His image. Adam, mankind, was never complete, and we're still being made in the image of the last Adam, the Christ. God does all of that through covenants.

In scripture, forming a covenant is referred to as "cutting a covenant" because ancient people would form a covenant by taking an animal, like a lamb, cut the lamb in half, lay the two halves on the ground, and then walk between the halves saying, "May it be done to me as it was done to this animal, if I break the covenant." The broken body and shed blood were the *testament* to the *covenant*.

Well, scripture refers to marriage as a covenant. And if you've ever gotten a divorce, you know that breaking that covenant feels less like going down to the

county courthouse and getting a certificate, and more like taking a live animal (like a lamb) and ripping it in half. And that lamb is your heart. God did say in the garden, “The two shall become one flesh.”

One flesh. One flesh, like your leg. You never wake up in the morning and say, “Is this the correct leg for my body? Maybe I’ve got the wrong leg.” So stop asking yourself, “Did I marry the right person?” She’s your flesh; he’s your flesh. No man hates his own body, but nourishes it and cherishes it, like Christ does the church.

Deadly serious, Jesus says, “So they are no longer two but one flesh. What, therefore, God has joined together, let no man tear asunder.”

Next verse:

They said to him, “Why then did Moses command one to give a certificate of divorce, and to put her away?” [And if you read Deuteronomy 24, you realize that’s not what Moses actually said.] He said to them, “For your hardness of heart Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. And I say to you: whoever divorces his wife, except for unchastity, and marries another, commits adultery.”

People think that’s harsh, yet in Mark and Luke, Jesus doesn’t include any exceptions.

In each case the issue is divorce and remarriage which produces adultery—as if God doesn’t honor the ridiculous, arrogant divorce certificates of human courts. Or maybe, just because you’re divorced doesn’t mean

you're free from obligation to your spouse. Whatever the case, in Matthew, Jesus does include this exception, "except for unchastity," as if your spouses' unchastity is already some form of divorce.

All that's confusing, I know, but this is amazing: God was divorced, and yet He did not remarry. I mean, it's astounding that God didn't just erase us and make a new world the moment that we sinned in the garden. Instead, He remained faithful, though we were faithless, choosing to bear all the shame and pain of this cursed world.

In Matthew 19, He's crossing the Jordan to redeem His faithless bride who's divorced Him and torn God's heart (Himself) in two. Maybe Matthew includes the exception to show that...

Jesus didn't have to, by law
(the old covenant is broken).
He wants to, in grace.

People say, "Can I get a divorce?" or "Did my divorce count, so I can remarry? What does God allow? What does He allow according to law? When do I get to divorce?"

Paul seems to make some allowance in 1 Corinthians 7. We just read Jesus' exception in Matthew, but I can't explain the details.

Let me say, if you are divorced and remarried, please don't be trapped in shame right now for things that have happened in the past. Jesus' first evangelist to the Samaritans was the woman at the well, a woman who had been divorced and remarried five times, and He sent her.

But if you're asking, "What does God want now?" and not just, "What can I get away with and still not go to Hell?" which is the same as asking, "How can I not be like Jesus and still get His stuff?" which is rape (which are questions that I probably should not answer because they're all going the wrong way, like the Pharisees')...

But if you're asking right now, "How can I be like Jesus?"

Well, Jesus is married...

And although His wife was faithless, He remained faithful...

Although she played the harlot and committed adultery, He did not forsake her...

Although she stripped Him naked and nailed Him to a tree, breaking His body and shedding His blood...

Although she divorced Him, He did not seek another but pursued her all the way to Hell...

His body broken and shed blood, paid for her violation of the old covenant of law.

And His body broken and shed blood ratify the new and eternal covenant of grace.

He is not bound by a covenant of law with an obligation to us. He would be justified, by law, to destroy us and marry another for we've broken that covenant and broken His heart.

He's not bound by the covenant of the law but by His own covenant of grace. That is, He's bound by His own eternal nature, nothing exterior to Himself. He is unrelenting love; it's His nature to choose to save

at any cost. Christian marriage is to be a picture of that love and that covenant of grace.

I'm not sure I understand all that or said it right, but when people say, "Well, surely Jesus wouldn't want me to stay in a marriage that's painful," I think,

My gosh, have you never read the Bible?!

Have you not noticed Who it is that we're following?

Do you not understand in Whose image we are being made?

I'm not saying that I'd do better; I'd probably do a lot worse. I'm not saying you should never separate or call the police... sometimes you absolutely should. I'm not saying that God does not forgive and redeem and sometimes call us into new marriages. He does. I'm just saying Jesus chooses to hang on a cross and sometimes He expects you to hang there with Him.

Matthew 19, Jesus is going to Jerusalem for a reason, "For the two shall become one flesh, and what God has joined together, let no man tear asunder." He will claim His body and bride.

The marriage covenant and the sacrament of that covenant takes two different, incomplete, sinful people and binds them together in nakedness, despite the shame, as a picture of Christ and His church. That is crazy!

These young, googly-eyed lovers, they come to me to do their weddings, and honestly, I get really scared. I feel like I'm leading lambs to the slaughter. In reality, I am.

Some years ago the West Virginia legislature considered putting warning labels on marriage licenses. I think it's a great idea. So when I marry couples, I often tape a warning label to the groom's chest, and it reads:

Warning: Marriage is a covenant, ratified by God. The surgeon general has determined that there are certain chemicals and hormones in the bloodstream at the time of your ceremony which cause dizziness and poor perception. These hormones commonly subside on your honeymoon. Use extreme caution! The person you are about to marry is a reprobate!

What sheer and absolute insanity to vow yourself, unconditionally, to another fallen, sinful, needy person?!

You could get crucified that way.

And the disciples understood. In the next verse, 19:10, the disciples say, "Well, Jesus, if this is the case, it's not expedient to marry."

You'd have to be crazy to get married! It's crazy to get married... Yet Jesus is married... Is He crazy? Yes! That's the point—He's crazy in love with you, and He is bound and determined to show you. So He's bound Himself to us fallen people in an eternal covenant, knowing full well what He's doing. He's crazy in love with you, "Bone of His bones and flesh of His flesh."

And now Jesus says, "It was this way from the beginning, male and female, two becoming one flesh." Paul tells us it was to teach us of Christ and the church. Which

means the Bridegroom (Christ) dying for His faithless bride (the church) was not plan B, but plan A. Which means the broken covenant of law is contained within the eternal covenant of grace. Which means God knew what would happen before the fall when He said, "Let us make man in our image."

He knew about the cross.
He made it the central point of His entire creation.

Paul wrote, "We've been made in the image of the first Adam [the man of dust] and will be made in the image of Christ," the man from heaven, Jesus, the Christ, the ultimate Adam.

We are being made in the image of Christ.
The perfect image of the invisible God.
The slaughtered lamb standing on the throne.
Jesus from the bosom of the Father, the heart of
God.

I'm being made in the image of sacrificial love.
Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

How could God ever get a self-centered, trophy hunter, like me, to sign up for such a program?

"Chantilly lace and a pretty face,
a ponytail, a hangin' down,
a jigglin' walk, and a gigglin' talk..."

Male and female from the beginning, all designed to
suck me in and get me crucified!

Henry Kissinger said, “No one will win the war between the sexes because there is too much fraternizing with the enemy.” Exactly! Everybody loses; everybody gets crucified according to plan in the image of Christ, male and female, to lure us into a covenant without condition. Bound to that which will kill us. That’s a pretty sneaky way to get a person crucified.

It’s like U2 sings, “I can’t live with or without you, with or without you.”

~ Not with you, as my possession, for you will shatter my idolatrous image of you.

~ Not without you because I’m so lonely, and it’s not good to be alone. I’m incomplete. I want my rib back.

“I can’t live with or without you, with or without you.” And the voice from heaven says, “Exactly, that’s the point. Now you understand, Peter. You can’t live.”

“You, sitting in your stuffed chair, smoking a pipe, humming the 007 theme song, staring, like an idiot, at the trophies of your own selfishness...

“You, ego, flesh, sinful self, alone in your own hell, walking in death...

“You can’t live. You must be crucified.”

Crucified... And, you see, it’s exactly then that my marriage is working as it was designed. For it is then that I

take on the image of Christ, when she takes most and gives least, and spurns my love. But because of this outrageous covenant, I bear her shame. Then I find myself no longer in an easy chair but hanging on a cross. Then I look most like Him.

People divorce just when it's beginning to work, just when they're crossing the Jordan.

People divorce because of "incompatibility," but nobody is compatible with the cross. That's the whole point.

People say their marriage is "bad," but unless it's "bad," it can't be good. Only bad people crucify other people. She crucifies me, and I crucify her because we surrender our naked shame to the light.

People will say, "I'll never tell him this," or "I'll never tell her that," because it will hurt him or her. Well, you're supposed to hurt him or her because you're supposed to bear each other's shame, covering it with body broken and blood shed.

When I confess a sin to my wife like, "Susan, I was up late last night, and I watched this movie, and, you know, really, if I'm honest, it was pornography, and I lusted after this other woman," it hurts her. It hurts her when I confess my sins to her, and it's supposed to, for she bears my shame. Her heart is broken. But when I see her choosing to suffer on my behalf, when she forgives, choosing to bear that pain, it melts my heart with something far more beautiful than,

"Chantilly lace and a pretty face,
a ponytail, a hangin' down..."

and I find that I never want to hurt her again. That's the power of the Gospel.

You know, even in high school that's how it happened, how she captured my heart, and how God trapped me in a covenant. I'd broken up with her one more time because she'd lost her luster, but then the song started again, and I wanted to possess her again, so I drove to her house once again.

It was a misty spring morning. The night before, I had I told her, "I just wasn't that attracted anymore." Her mom answered the door and informed me that Susan was at the park, feeding the ducks. I drove to the park and, off in the distance, I saw her. She didn't see me, but I saw her, feeding the ducks in the rain. I parked the car, and I just watched her. I watched her in the distance as she wept... because of me.

And what I saw wasn't "chantilly lace and a pretty face," but a face streaked with tears. "Chantilly lace and a pretty face" made me look... just like feeding the 5,000 and raising the dead made you look—at first.

"Chantilly lace and a pretty face" made me look, but now it was gone. I saw her heart, naked and exposed. She had allowed it to be crucified by me. She'd fallen so far for me that she was hanging on a cross. I had actually bagged a trophy, killed a trophy, put it in my trophy room, but now my trophy was rising from the dead and bagging me.

What I saw was a little bit of Jesus, body broken and blood shed. What I sought to possess, began to possess me, possess me all the way to the altar.

But make no mistake, the trophy hunter still roams in my heart, but he's being replaced by "body broken and

blood shed,” no longer the consumer, but being made into the image of the Creator.

When the trophy hunter gives me trouble, it’s not, “Chantilly lace and a pretty face” that helps me most, it’s not some law that gives me the edge.

It’s remembering my wife, feeding the ducks in the rain.

It’s remembering her weeping in my arms on the floor of our apartment in L.A.

It’s thinking of how I terrorized her, yelling, and ridiculing her just recently... and yet, she forgave me.

It’s remembering Jesus Christ and Him crucified in her for me.

And here’s the great secret, He’s more beautiful than anything in all creation.

As we get older, “Chantilly lace and a pretty face” begin to fade, but His beauty grows...

as we weep in each other’s arms,

as we bear each other’s pain,

as we confess our sins one to another and receive grace,

as we cover each other’s naked shame with body broken and blood shed.

His beauty grows, and *He* fills us, and *He* completes us through marriage, even if, maybe especially if, you're in a hard marriage. You may feel only pain right now; that's how crosses feel. Yet all heaven gazes in awe at the image in you, even if, maybe especially if, you're single.

Next verse:

The disciples said to him, "If such is the case of a man with his wife, it is not expedient to marry." But he said to them, "Not all men can receive this saying, but only those to whom it is given. For there are eunuchs who have been so from birth, and there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. He who is able to receive this, let him receive it."

Some are born without the equipment necessary for sexual function. Some are made that way by men. I think that includes all forms of abuse. Some Jesus heals in this world, but if He doesn't, don't worry. Be a eunuch for the sake of the kingdom. Some are eunuchs (single) for the sake of the kingdom.

You know, the two guys who wrote the best on marriage and claimed the most for marriage were Paul and Jesus. Paul had been married but remained unmarried for the kingdom. Jesus never married, yet He did marry you. Paul and Jesus were both married to the kingdom, the bride, the church. And each of us is married to Jesus.

Celibacy is a very high calling in scripture. It may not include physical sex, yet it's profoundly sexy. Women,

you are married to Christ, the ultimate man. Men, you are called to die for the spotless bride. And we're all bound in covenant to one another.

To love anyone as Jesus loved is to sign up to be crucified. There is no divorce from the kingdom of God and the body of Christ, so don't bail out. He's making you in His image. He's making you real.

I read this at every wedding I do, and it's all about you, from The Velveteen Rabbit:

"What is REAL?" asked the Rabbit one day, as they were lying side by side near the nursery fender, just before Nana came in to tidy up the room. "Does it mean having things that buzz inside you and a stick-out handle?"

"Real isn't how you are made," said the Skin Horse. "It's a thing that happens to you. When a child loves you for a long, long time, not just to play with, but REALLY loves you, then you become Real."

"Does it hurt?" asked the Rabbit.

"Sometimes," said the Skin Horse, for he was always truthful. "When you are Real, you don't mind being hurt."

"Does it happen all at once, like being wound up," he asked, "or bit by bit?"

"It doesn't happen all at once," said the Skin Horse. "You become. It takes a long time. That's why it doesn't often happen to people who break easily, or have sharp edges, or who have to be carefully kept. Generally, by the time you are Real, most of

your hair has been loved off, and your eyes
drop out and you get loose in the joints and
very shabby. But these things don't matter at
all, because once you are Real, you can't be
ugly except to people who don't
understand." (The Velveteen Rabbit)

The love of God in Christ Jesus (through the people
in this room and in marriage) is making you real,
completing you in Christ's image, like a Skin Horse.

The heart of God,
the image of God,
the Lamb on the throne
as if He had been slain,
Jesus, loose in the joints and kind of
shabby,
crucified for love.
Absolutely nothing is more beautiful.

And so, Jesus, from the bosom of the Father, the
heart of God, crossed the Jordan on His way to Jerusalem.
And on that night in Jerusalem that He was betrayed, and
abandoned, and tortured, and broken, and whipped, and
abused, He took bread, and He broke it saying, "This is my
body, given to you. Do this in remembrance of me." And in
the same way, after supper, He took the cup, and He said,
"This is the cup of the new covenant in my blood, shed for
the forgiveness of sins. Drink of it, all of you, in
remembrance of me."

We invite you, Eve, to come forward and be
completed in your Groom, to surrender your emptiness to
Him and ask Him to fill you. And, oh yeah, sometimes it

hurts to follow Him, but He's shown you, He is good. So come to the table, tear off a piece of the bread, dip it in the cup. Black cups are wine, purple cups are juice; they're both blood, and this is body because He loves you. And you love, because He first loved you. Amen.

[The congregation is clapping after singing, "His loving kindness is better than life."] Why are you clapping? Because His loving kindness is better than life? Okay, now remember that because loving kindness usually translates a Hebrew word, and the Hebrew word in the Old Testament is "hesed." Hesed means "covenant love." So you're clapping because "covenant love" is better than life, and the Lord says, "That's right, and I'm going to show you. [Pointing to the cross...] One day you'll see it." It is better than life. Not only that, it is true life, and He's given it to you.

I was at a thing Thursday night for Columbia, and I was listening to friends and Brother Andrew talk about going to these jungles, and many of them are martyred for their faith. And I remember thinking to myself as I sat there, "Dang, God, I know this is a little bit nuts, but there's something in me, that would like to go there and die for you, and yet I'm here." And it felt like His Spirit said, "Well, you could die for your bride."

You know, we look and see that as so dramatic, going off to the jungles of Columbia and offering up your life for covenant love. Are you married? You could die for your bride. If you're not married, hey, did you know that all

these people in this room are a bride? You could die for them.

And I need to tell you that dying for my earthly bride, I find pretty easy. I mean, she's still got a lot of chantilly lace, and a very pretty face, and all that kind of stuff. Some of you are in really difficult marriages, and you wonder, "Does anybody see? Does anybody know?" Yeah, He knows. And so you're right there, I believe, sitting next to Nate Saint, who died for his faith in the jungles of Ecuador. You're right there next to Peter, crucified upside down. You're right there next to Paul who, they say, was beheaded.

You're dying, and you're coming to life. And so, have courage. You know, scripture says, "He endured the cross, despising the shame, for the joy that was set before Him." I think that's ecstasy; I think that's communion with you.

And sometimes, even in my earthly marriage, when we struggle, I know that I just want to be a jerk to my wife, but I think to myself, "No, I really need to be a better husband because I'd like some ecstasy later on." If you think I'm being crass, then you need to go back and read the Bible. From the beginning, male and female, two becoming one flesh, telling an incredibly great story, and right now, you're in the middle of it. And so have courage and endure for the joy that is set before you in our Lord Jesus. Amen.

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. And God blessed them, and God said to them, “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 air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth...” Then the LORD God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.” So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh; and the rib which the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. Then the man said,

“This at last is bone of my bones
and flesh of my flesh;
she shall be called Woman,
because she was taken out of Man.”

Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh. And the man and his wife were both naked, and were not ashamed... So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband, and he ate. Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves aprons... The man called his wife’s name Eve, because she was the mother of all living. And the LORD God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins, and clothed them.

Genesis 1:26-28, 2:18, 21-25, 3:6-7,20-21

During the reign of King Josiah, the LORD said to me,
“Have you seen what faithless Israel has done? She has
gone up on every high hill and under every spreading tree

and has committed adultery there. I thought that after she had done all this she would return to me but she did not, and her unfaithful sister Judah saw it. I gave faithless Israel her certificate of divorce and sent her away because of all her adulteries. Yet I saw that her unfaithful sister Judah had no fear; she also went out and committed adultery. Because Israel's immorality mattered so little to her, she defiled the land and committed adultery with stone and wood... Go, proclaim this message toward the north:"

'Return, faithless Israel,' declares the LORD,

'I will frown on you no longer,

for I am merciful,' declares the LORD,

'I will not be angry forever.

Only acknowledge your guilt—

you have rebelled against the LORD your God,

you have scattered your favors to foreign gods

under every spreading tree,

and have not obeyed me,"

declares the LORD.

"Return, faithless people," declares the LORD, "for I am your husband. I will choose you—one from a town and two from a clan—and bring you to Zion."

Jeremiah 3:6-9, 12-14

He says: "It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the preserved of Israel; I will give you as a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth..." Thus says the LORD: "In a time of favor I have answered you, in a day of salvation I have helped you; I have kept you and given you as a covenant to the people, to establish the land, to apportion the desolate heritages..." Sing for joy, O heavens, and exult, O earth; break forth, O mountains, into singing! For the LORD has comforted his people, and will

have compassion on his afflicted. But Zion said, “The LORD has forsaken me, my Lord has forgotten me.” “Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you...” Thus says the LORD: “Where is your mother’s bill of divorce, with which I put her away? Or which of my creditors is it to whom I have sold you? Behold, for your iniquities you were sold, and for your transgressions your mother was put away. Why, when I came, was there no man? When I called, was there no one to answer? Is my hand shortened, that it cannot redeem? Or have I no power to deliver? Behold, by my rebuke I dry up the sea, I make the rivers a desert; their fish stink for lack of water, and die of thirst. I clothe the heavens with blackness, and make sackcloth their covering.”

Isaiah 49:6, 8, 13-15, 50:1-3

Now when Jesus had finished these sayings, he went away from Galilee and entered the region of Judea beyond the Jordan; and large crowds followed him, and he healed them there. And Pharisees came up to him and tested him by asking, “Is it lawful to divorce one’s wife for any cause?” He answered, “Have you not read that he who made them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’? So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man put asunder.” They said to him, “Why then did Moses command one to give a certificate of divorce, and to put her away?” He said to them, “For your hardness of heart Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so.

And I say to you: whoever divorces his wife, except for unchastity, and marries another, commits adultery.”

Matthew 19:1-9

And he said to them, “Whoever divorces his wife and marries another, commits adultery against her; and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery.”

Mark 10:11-12

Every one who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery, and he who marries a woman divorced from her husband commits adultery.

Luke 16:18

To the married I give charge, not I but the Lord, that the wife should not separate from her husband (but if she does, let her remain single or else be reconciled to her husband)—and that the husband should not divorce his wife.

1 Corinthians 7:10-11

“For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” This mystery is a profound one, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.

Ephesians 5:31-32

Christian writers (notably Milton) have sometimes spoken of the husband’s headship with a complacency to make the blood run cold. We must go back to our Bibles. The husband is the head of the wife just in so far as he is to her what Christ is to the Church. He is to love her as Christ loved the Church—read on—*and give his life for her* (*Eph.V*, 25). This headship, then, is most fully embodied not in the husband we should all wish to be but in him whose marriage is most like a crucifixion; whose wife

receives most and gives least, is most unworthy of him, is—in her own mere nature—least lovable.

C.S. Lewis

To the rest I say, not the Lord, that if any brother has a wife who is an unbeliever, and she consents to live with him, he should not divorce her. If any woman has a husband who is an unbeliever, and he consents to live with her, she should not divorce him. For the unbelieving husband is consecrated through his wife, and the unbelieving wife is consecrated through her husband. Otherwise, your children would be unclean, but as it is they are holy. But if the unbelieving partner desires to separate, let it be so; in such a case the brother or sister is not bound. For God has called us to peace.

1 Corinthians 7:12-15

“And I say to you: whoever divorces his wife, except for unchastity, and marries another, commits adultery.” The disciples said to him, “If such is the case of a man with his wife, it is not expedient to marry.” But he said to them, “Not all men can receive this saying, but only those to whom it is given. For there are eunuchs who have been so from birth, and there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. He who is able to receive this, let him receive it.”

Matthew 19:9-12

Let not the foreigner who has joined himself to the LORD say, “The LORD will surely separate me from his people”; and let not the eunuch say, “Behold, I am a dry tree.” For thus says the LORD: “To the eunuchs who keep my sabbaths, who choose the things that please me and hold

fast my covenant, I will give in my house and within my walls a monument and a name better than sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name which shall not be cut off.”

Isaiah 56:3-5

I wish that all were as I myself am. But each has his own special gift from God, one of one kind and one of another. To the unmarried and the widows I say that it is well for them to remain single as I do... I want you to be free from anxieties. The unmarried man is anxious about the affairs of the Lord, how to please the Lord; but the married man is anxious about worldly affairs, how to please his wife, and his interests are divided. And the unmarried woman or girl is anxious about the affairs of the Lord, how to be holy in body and spirit; but the married woman is anxious about worldly affairs, how to please her husband.

1 Corinthians 7:7-8, 32-34

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband; and I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling of God is with men. He will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself will be with them.”

Revelation 21:1-3

But the Jerusalem above is free, and she is our mother. For it is written,

“Rejoice, O barren one who does not bear;
break forth and shout, you who are not in travail;

for the children of the desolate one are many more
than the children of her that is married.”

Galatians 4:26-27

“It doesn't happen all at once,” said the Skin Horse. “You become. It takes a long time. That's why it doesn't often happen to people who break easily, or have sharp edges, or who have to be carefully kept. Generally, by the time you are Real, most of your hair has been loved off, and your eyes drop out and you get loose in the joints and very shabby. But these things don't matter at all, because once you are Real, you can't be ugly except to people who don't understand.”

Marjorie Williams, The Velveteen Rabbit

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