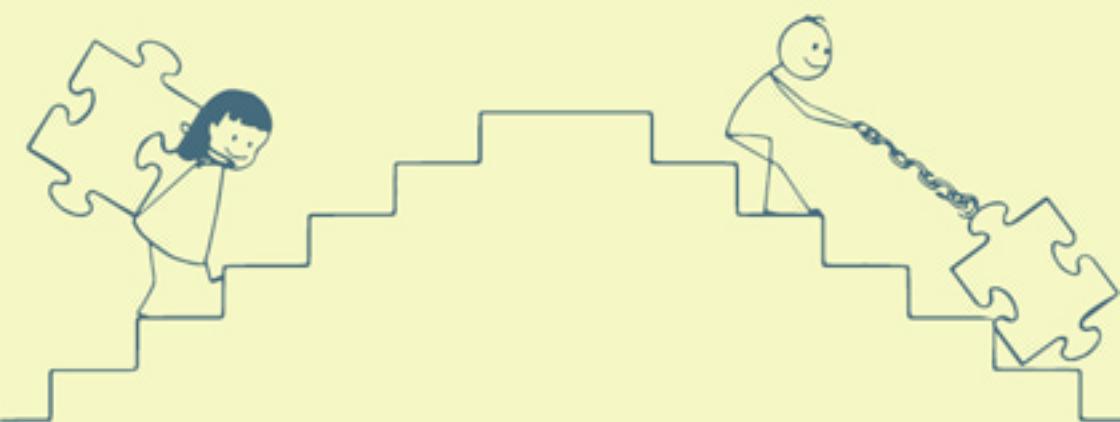


Not A Partnership



Why We Keep Getting Marriage Wrong,
& How We Can Get It Right

TOD JACOBS & PETER LYNN

Not A
Partnership

www.NotAPartnership.com

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by Tod Jacobs and Peter Lynn

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TOD JACOBS & PETER LYNN

Why We Keep Getting Marriage Wrong,
& How We Can Get It Right

Dedicated to
Mariam Jacobs
and
Regine Lynn
our beloved wives
who have shown us what it means
to be a truly loving spouse.

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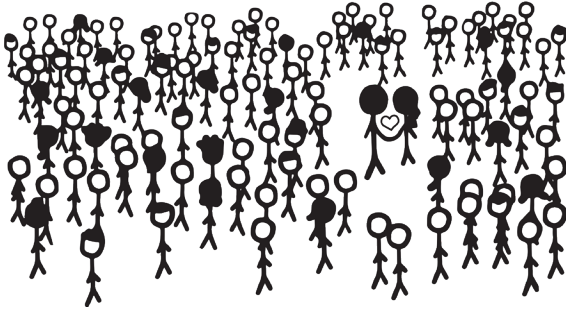
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PART ONE

What Exactly is Marriage and Why is it So Important?

Back to the Beginning: What is Marriage?



TAKING SIDES

Before we learn how to apply research, experience, and wisdom as guides to marriage, let's take a journey back to the beginning. The essential answers to the questions of *what* marriage is and *why* marriage is can be found in the world's oldest book, in its description of the very first marriage in the history of man. At the peak of the process of building the world, the Creator made Adam and Eve. A closer look at the story will reveal something quite astonishing. When Genesis⁸ describes the making of man, the verse states that "*male and female He created them.*" The first human being was, quite literally, a unified person who was *both male and female*.

The English word "Adam" fails to capture the nuance of the original Hebrew. The Hebrew word "Adam" is not a

8. Genesis 1:27.

proper name, nor does it translate as “male.” “Adam” simply means *human*. In fact, it is not until a full chapter later that “God cast a deep sleep upon the human...and He took one of his sides and...fashioned the side that He had taken from the human into a woman.”⁹ Ultimately, and for some reason (as we’ll see), the two parts of the original human entity needed to be separated into two individual and different beings, man and woman. With Eve removed from Adam, each part was left with a certain lack that only the other would be able to fill. Adam, from whom an essential part had been removed, was left incomplete. Eve, created from a part of the original person, was left incomplete. They became two physical beings, each lacking an emotional and spiritual piece held by the other. Yet those two physical beings were first created as one.

ONE TO TWO TO ONE

Now, assuming that the Almighty knows what He’s doing, what on earth was the point of creating the first human as a male-female if the point was to separate them forever after? The answer has compelling implications: Man and woman were initially an undivided, unified entity. Totally one. Nothing separated them. Their understanding and sensitivities were exactly the same. Their physical, emotional, and spiritual ideals and goals and desires aligned perfectly. They could effortlessly produce children and navigate life in the Garden of Eden without any conflict. One team from start to finish. A marriage made in heaven.

But that original oneness of man and wife was given

9. Genesis 2:21-22.

only as a short and temporary gift, a sort of spiritual template or paradigm that would forever echo in the human soul. Yes, we are now created separate, alone, unique in our understandings and desires and ideals. But our separateness comes with the deep subconscious realization that alone we're simply not whole. By ourselves we feel like half a human. We don't belong alone. We crave fulfillment. We seek intimacy. We long to trust and count on someone, and to be that person upon whom the other can always rely. We therefore have to look beyond ourselves to *re*-establish that greater unity. That's the true source of our aching and longing for a deep and intimate relationship with an *other*. It's not just about fulfilling our physical drives. It's not just about having children. It's about becoming whole again. Our own re-enactment of the Adam and Eve marriage.

The beauty of marrying and building a relationship is an echo of that original oneness and our soul-level desire to restore it. Together we can build and complete each other into something far greater than either of us could achieve by ourselves. Scripture could not have stated that goal more clearly: *They shall become one flesh.*¹⁰ This, above all else, forms the powerful longing to marry which most of us experience.

TAKING ALONE

This leads to a perplexing question: If the goal is unity, why did the Almighty separate man and woman in the first place?

The answer starts with an insight. Alone and self-sufficient, we tend to burn out as human beings. For a time, we

10. Genesis 2:24.

revel in our independence. When a baby can hold the spoon herself, when she takes those first glorious steps, as she frees herself from her parents' grip, as she begins to make a living and support herself, the feeling is just amazing — the exhilaration of becoming “me”!

But at some point, that independence starts to give way to self-centeredness and self-absorption. I like it my way. I want my things just so. I want this furniture and this music and that movie and this food and the other vacation. Remember Burger King's old jingle, “Have It Your Way”? (It was surpassed only by Burger King's updated motto, “Be Your Way!” — apparently the old jingle just wasn't ME-centered enough...).

The more life centers around me, the more innately selfish and emotionally sterile I become and the more alone I truly am (even when I am surrounded by people). Loneliness gives way to selfishness and taking. That's what the Almighty alluded to just before He created Eve, with the deceptively simple declaration, “It is not good that the human be alone.”¹¹

Why is alone not good? If the total human is fully there, why change things?

The human as a single being was missing something absolutely vital to his humanity.

What was missing?

Giving.

As we shall see, giving — from many angles and in many forms — is the secret elixir that creates a great marriage and a great human being. This book will present the four pillars

11. Genesis 2:18.

that form the foundation of success in marriage. Giving is the ground upon which all four pillars stand.

WHAT'S GOOD?

We're used to thinking that being alone is "not good" simply because "It's better to have company" or "It's bad to be alone." But if the starting point was total unity and completeness, if literally nothing was missing, then surely there was no problem with being alone!

The real lack in Adam and Eve's original oneness — the "not good" of it — was that this complete being had no means for becoming truly "good." Why? Because true goodness is defined by *giving*. A single, complete, self-contained being has no reason to give. It's all there. I need nothing, and I can give nothing. In the absence of giving I have no way to get beyond my limited and selfish self.

At a still deeper level, the ultimate job of a human is to emulate the Creator. That defines my job rather differently. It's not all about me and my satisfaction. On the contrary, the real path to myself lies in making space for, giving to, and helping build the other. It seems paradoxical, but the truth is that by focusing on the other I ultimately find myself, my mission, and my happiness.

YOU-LOGY

Think for a moment. What would I like my children to say about me at my eulogy? That I was clever in business? That I was a great athlete? That no one else ever got the last word when I was around? That my taste in clothes was impeccable? That I had the most impressive car collection? The

most stunning home? The best top-spin backhand? That my soufflé was the lightest? That I was better looking than my neighbors and colleagues? Really?

Most of us, when we think about it, want to be remembered as being *good* people. It may be one of the great universal truths about which few disagree. That goodness is defined by the giving we did in our lives.

“She always took care of us.”

“He never let a friend down.”

“She sacrificed her needs so that we could have ours met.”

“He was always about the other.”

“She had a smile for anyone who was feeling down.”

“He cared about his community and put his money where his mouth was.”

“She always fought for the downtrodden.”

Despite the nearly universal agreement and clarity we have on the deeper goals of life, how much do we actually focus on those goals on a day-to-day basis?

The beauty of marriage is that it provides a constant framework of opportunity for achieving the goals that most of us hope to be remembered for. Alone, we can't give fully. If we can't give, we can't attain real goodness. There are few other truths we hold to be self-evident. How odd, then, that we spend so little time actually focusing on life's primary goal and pathway to meaning and happiness. It somehow never makes its way onto my smartphone calendar. How many of us wake up in the morning and find “giving” and “developing my goodness and greatness” on the day's agenda, along with my workout, meetings, and after-work

plans? How many of us spend time focusing on how and when to give?

Marriage is about much more than curing loneliness and even more than propagating the species. That's why Adam and Eve had to be separated. They needed an opportunity to give and give and give to each other, and, in so doing, earn their oneness and completeness. That makes marriage *good*. That made each of them good. That process of giving can help make us truly good as well.

MARRIAGE: THE PRIMARY VEHICLE

Marriage is not just a *good* place to give and to develop our goodness. It is *the* place for life's ultimate goals to be fulfilled. If we fail to develop ourselves and our spouses in this cosmically beautiful relationship, we can't simply make up for it in other arenas. Of course, we have opportunities to give to children, friends, colleagues and the needy, as well as to our pets and our hobbies. And of course these acts of kindness and caring build ourselves and others. But the ultimate, most intense, multi-faceted, enduring, meaningful, productive, and *consistent* giving — the kind of giving that both defines us and can transform us — can best (if not *only*) be expressed through marriage.

OVERCOMING DIFFERENCES

This discovery leads to perplexing question number two: Assuming we needed to be separated to create an opportunity for giving, why did we have to be made so inscrutably *different*?! Couldn't we have each received 50% of what we were originally, right down the middle? I mean, forget about

re-attaining eternal oneness — my spouse and I can hardly get through an evening without a major disagreement, let alone attain total unification!

“She’s just so different from me.”

“Sometimes I just don’t get him at all!”

“She’s impossible to please.”

“He doesn’t appreciate what I do for him.”

“She wants me to watch a chick flick?!”

“His idea of a romantic evening is to download ‘Diehard’ and watch it over beer and nachos!”

“I love watching sports!”

“I hate watching sports!”

“My perfect day is shopping, lunch, and a hot cappuccino!”

“My idea of paradise is fishing in a cold river.”

“Why does she insist I talk when I need time to myself?”

“Why can’t he be there for me when I need him to listen?!”

“She’s all business and I’m about fun.”

“I need my space!”

“I need your love!”

How on earth can we be expected to come together and unify if it means crossing so many and such constant hurdles? It seems like even the best of marriages have endless ups and downs and need frequent therapy. What *was* the Almighty thinking?!

HELP! I NEED SOMEBODY!

The very first description we have of Eve in her relationship to Adam is that she was created to be his “*ezer kenegdo*.”

These Hebrew words are commonly translated as his “help meet.”¹² Besides the fact that most English speakers have no idea what a “help meet” is, that translation is not accurate. A look back at the original Hebrew will help us understand the true meaning.

The original Hebrew phrase “*ezer kenegdo*” literally means “a helper (*ezer*) against him (*kenegdo*).”

What does this mean? How can she be a helper if she is against him? To understand this better, let’s focus on the concept “help.”

The answer reveals the deepest foundation of marriage. The job of each spouse is to help the other in every way. I help take care of her needs, and she helps take care of mine. That means we have to study each other, get to know each other, care about each other. I can’t give to her if I don’t know what makes her happy and I don’t understand what she lacks. She can’t give to me if she keeps missing me or giving me what she likes rather than what I like. We need to figure out what makes the other tick.

- 🧡 I need to be left alone sometimes
- 🧡 She needs to be heard
- 🧡 She wants to feel appreciated and loved
- 🧡 He wants to be admired
- 🧡 I have to avoid things she finds upsetting or disturbing
- 🧡 She needs to respect my boundaries. I need to express love to her frequently and clearly

12. Genesis, King James version, 2:20.

Being a true giver in marriage means getting outside of myself for the sake of my spouse. When we work to understand and properly give to each other, we create happiness and satisfaction. We also become bigger and better people in the process. That journey leads us to true oneness.

That's the "help" part of the equation. I get that. Now what is this "against" component?

HOLD IT AGAINST ME!

Each of us enters the world as a huge bundle of needs and wants. Some have described a baby as someone who is willing to wake up half a continent because he wants a drink of water. The long and arduous process of maturation involves growing out of our natural, childish self-centeredness and into the less natural adult roles of giving and taking responsibility.

As I'm not perfect, sometimes I fail to give. I forget my real job in life. In marriage it often begins with my taking her for granted. I don't appreciate all she does for me. By taking her giving as a given, so to speak, I begin focusing more and more on *my* needs. I lose sight of hers. I make demands. All that she does becomes part of my baseline set of expectations to the point that I don't even notice the goodness in what she does for me. I do notice what she *doesn't* do for me, and I am very perceptive when it comes to her shortcomings and faults.

That's exactly when she becomes "against" me.

The feeling of confrontation, of opposition, usually begins just after the cosmic but short-lived high of romance begins to fade, sometime within a few weeks of the wedding

(if we're lucky). But it is precisely at that moment that a husband or a wife has the opportunity to discover that marriage is the primary vehicle for growing as a person. That friction of "against" that gnaws at my heart when I have failed to live up to my human potential for goodness is the failsafe mechanism built into the system to remind me that I've lost my way and that it's time to refocus and start giving again.

HEW AND ME

The risk of this mechanism is that we may totally misread the cues. As the initial infatuation wears off and the inevitable differences and little irritants begin to appear, many spouses begin to suspect that they married the wrong person. He begins to draw away. She shuts down in response. The differences and misaligned sensitivities begin to magnify. The fighting starts. Intimacy suffers. The creeping loneliness of unhappy marriage begins to set in as each side begins contemplating escaping — if not physically, then emotionally.

The differences we discover in each other are inevitable. But lacking a proper framework for understanding what a real marriage is, we can miss the boat completely. In reality, the process of negotiating and accommodating those differences in search of a higher balance and harmony *is* the marriage. Each of us expresses needs and reactions that can appear inscrutable and maddening to each other. We don't fit so naturally together. That's by design!

When a mason comes to repair a breach in the wall, the first thing he does is take a rough stone that's *too big* for the hole. Then he carefully hews it and sands it at each point of friction, turning it round and round until at last it

fits in perfectly. Without that friction the stone never gets smoothed and the wall stays broken. So it is in our marriage. The job is to take our differences and to continually grind away our rough edges until our fit is smooth. Each new stone we fit into its place in that process builds and fortifies the structure of our marriage.

Marrying someone and expecting things to just fall into place harmoniously is akin to throwing those variegated natural rough stones together and hoping they all snap into place easily and make a house.

COMPLEMENT YOUR SPOUSE!

A mature marriage begins *not* by marrying someone who's the same as I. On the contrary, our differences are the raw notes that can become harmony. The richness of the relationship lies precisely in those areas where we function differently. Partly, it's through the growth that comes through the accommodation. Perhaps more important and more inspiring is the moment we realize that we can embrace our differences and use them to build something so much bigger and more beautiful together than we could apart.

In the business world, there are swaggering entrepreneurs, visionaries, and risk takers on the one hand, and there are conservative and careful bean-counters on the other. Most investors would be well advised to avoid either extreme when searching for the perfect investment. However, when you pair the cowboy with the buttoned up controller, something extraordinary happens. It usually begins with friction. Vision versus practical reality. Unlike in marriage, in business the value of that friction is treasured.

It's still friction, no doubt about it. But as each side realizes that it can't function without the other, the harmony begins to take shape. That's where real value is built, a shared goal pursued by harmonized but opposite perspectives, a sum greater than the parts.

In marriage it's no different. It's precisely those unique and differing perspectives, sensitivities and natures that come together to build a bigger marriage and bigger spouses. Neither side gives up who they are. Each side brings unique talent, perspective, and energy to literally every issue that arises over a lifetime of living together.

In the beginning, when I become aware of our differences, it often feels like I have to *accommodate* my spouse's desire, needs, and visions. Meaning, I see her as limited, not able to match my broader and deeper intellect and insight. But what can I do? I took on a commitment to take care of her and make her happy and work together...

As we mature in our marriage, however, I learn to get out of myself and my narrow, self-centric world (however deep and smart I may be) and slowly I lower my defensiveness. As this process occurs, I often, if not always, happily discover that the differing or opposing vision of my spouse actually complements my picture of reality, whether the issue involves how we spend our time, how we raise our kids, or simply how to relate to the opportunities and challenges that life constantly throws our way. Just as each of my eyes by itself has no depth perception until they work together to view an object, so do our combined talents and sensitivities create greater wisdom and possibilities than either of us can achieve alone.

In mystical terms, that creation of a more perfect perception, unity, and reality occurs when two spouses, often polar opposite beings, come together as one. The underlying spiritual forces that merge into a complete being are known in the ancient sources as being “male” and “female.” A clear picture of those paradigms, with their differing natures, strengths, and weaknesses, can illuminate both the pitfalls and promises of marriage. Let’s turn our focus to this amazing subject — the essence of what “male” and “female” are.

Not A Partnership

For more than 13 years, Tod and Peter have worked together in the area of marriage. Their primary objective is to help students develop a mature and idealistic vision of marriage as the primary vehicle to create wholeness, meaning, purpose and happiness in their lives, and on working to perfect the character issues that lie at the core of a successful spouse — giving, empathy, focus, staying power and a strong desire to help build the other. Their work combines practical and mystical Jewish wisdom with modern theory and techniques, and with experience accrued through years of real-world implementation and practice.



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