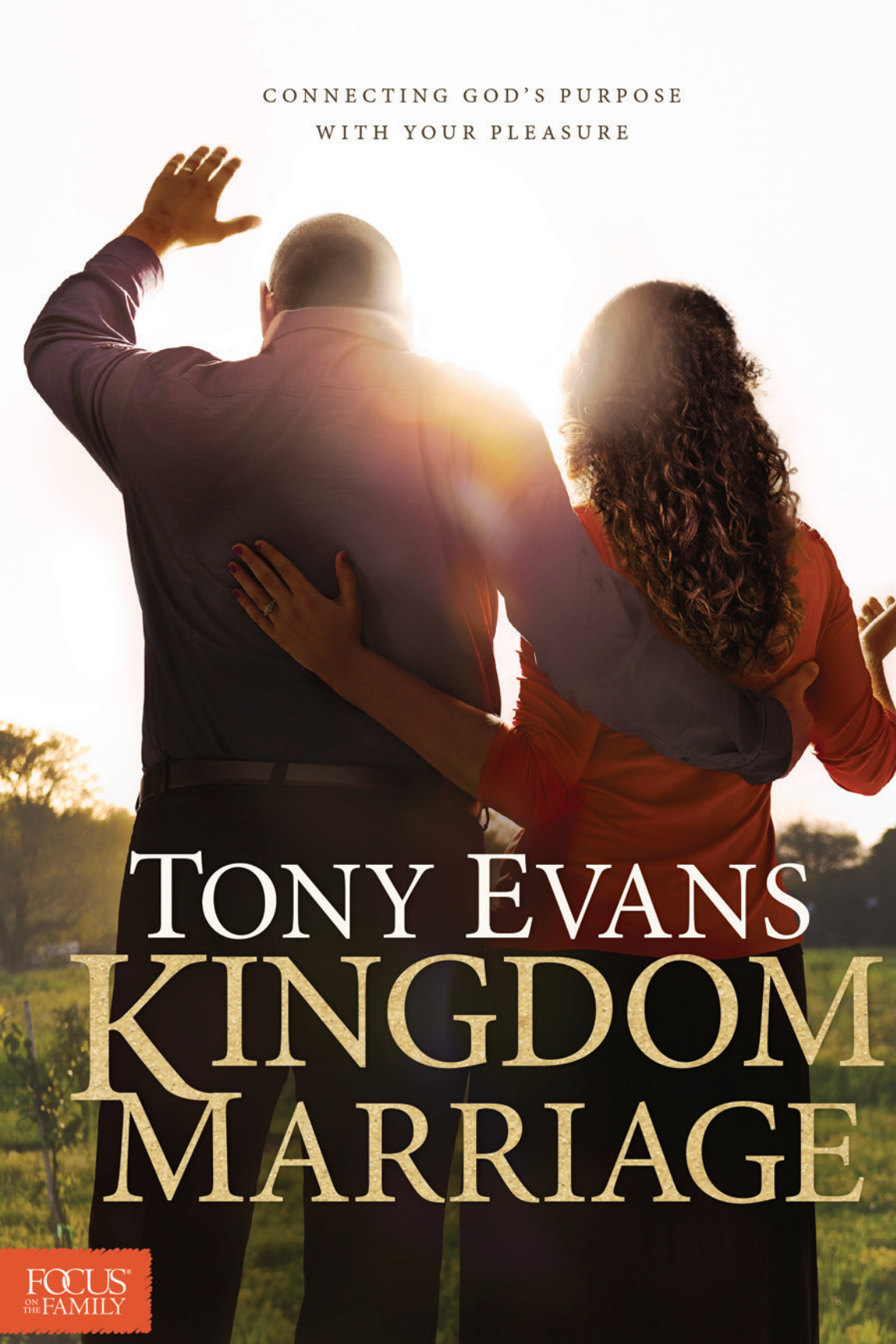


CONNECTING GOD'S PURPOSE
WITH YOUR PLEASURE

A man and a woman are seen from behind, embracing each other in a field. The man is on the left, wearing a purple long-sleeved shirt and dark pants, with his right hand raised towards the sky. The woman is on the right, wearing a red top, with her arms around the man's waist. The background is a bright sunset or sunrise over a green field, with trees visible in the distance. The overall mood is peaceful and romantic.

TONY EVANS
KINGDOM
MARRIAGE

FOCUS[®]
ON THE FAMILY

PRAISE FOR
Kingdom Marriage

One of the major pillars of our research at the National Center for Fathering is modeling. Tony and Lois are not only great communicators on the message of marriage, they truly model kingdom marriage. I love how Tony defines kingdom marriage as, “connecting God’s purpose with your pleasure.” This book is a most excellent blueprint for building a strong marriage—and God loves marriage.

CAREY AND MELANIE CASEY
National Center for Fathering

What exactly does it mean to have a “kingdom perspective” on marriage? Dr. Tony Evans answers that question with pastoral insight and biblical wisdom in this engaging new book. *Kingdom Marriage* is essential reading for husbands and wives who want to make their relationship the best it can be for the sake of the Kingdom.

DR. GREG SMALLEY
Vice president of Marriage and Family Formation, Focus on the Family

In the midst of a cultural battle on marriage, Dr. Tony Evans has clearly identified the importance of reorienting our hearts toward God’s kingdom. This fresh biblical perspective is like a much needed “realignment” for our relationships.

TIM POPADIC
President, Relationship Enrichment Collaborative and executive producer of the Date Night Comedy Tour

Kingdom Marriage is a book that’ll influence my own marriage for a very long time! When it comes to our marriage, there’s so much more going on than meets the eye. Pastor Evans unveils scripturally so much of what we cannot see, and he does it in a way that somehow leaves you convicted but motivated to act, all at the same time. Get the angels summoned on your behalf. Find the true purpose of what your marriage was meant to be. Be more fulfilled in your marriage than you ever dreamed possible. That’s a legacy worth leaving to your kids.

JOSHUA STRAUB, PH.D.
Author, *Safe House: How Emotional Safety Is the Key to Raising Kids Who Live, Love, and Lead Well*

Tony Evans is without a doubt truly one of the greatest communicators of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries! The reason he speaks and writes so well is because his heart is 100 percent committed to serving Jesus and making Him known to the world. I highly recommend this book because any part of Tony Evans that you or I can receive will make us a much better person, a better spouse, and a greater person of knowing a relationship with Jesus Christ.

JOE WHITE

President, Kanakuk Ministries

I daresay *Kingdom Marriage* will be unlike any marriage book you've read all year. Ninety percent of marriage books focus on the human element; *Kingdom Marriage* takes you where very few marriage books go: straight into the spiritual realm. Dr. Tony Evans talks about spiritual warfare, spiritual purpose, spiritual strongholds, and much, much more. If you've read fifty marriage books, you still need to read this one, as it is unlike all the others. The chapter on restoration alone is worth the price of the entire book. Masterfully done, prophetically alive, and biblically true, *Kingdom Marriage* is a tour de force for couples who want to become more spiritually aware in their marriage.

GARY THOMAS

Author, *Sacred Marriage* and *A Lifelong Love*

We love this book! *Kingdom Marriage* is perfect for couples like us who need to be reminded of the biblical, historical, and current truth about how marriage was designed by God. Every couple should read this book and give it as a gift to others they care about.

SCOTT AND BETHANY PALMER

The Money Couple

Whether you are engaged to be married or you've been married for sixty years, you should read this book with your spouse. *Kingdom Marriage* will give you the wisdom and practical insight to make your marriage what God intended it to be—not just a social contract, but a sacred covenant.

RACHEL CRUZE

New York Times best-selling author and personal finance expert

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TYNDALE HOUSE PUBLISHERS, INC.
CAROL STREAM, ILLINOIS

Kingdom Marriage: Connecting God's Purpose with Your Pleasure

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PART I



The Foundation of a
**KINGDOM
MARRIAGE**

1



ORIGIN

A KINGDOM MARRIAGE not only shares passion, but more important, it has a purpose.

Passion matters and happiness is great, but rather than being the purposes for marriage, they are benefits. Marriage exists to glorify God by expanding His rule and reach. It uniquely reflects His image like nothing else. When you pursue God's purpose as a couple, then everything else you value in life—such as happiness, love, and satisfaction—will fall into place.

The absence of a kingdom purpose for marriage makes it appear as if many couples have been married by the secretary of war rather than the justice of the peace. A passenger on a plane one day noticed that the man sitting next to him had his wedding ring on the wrong hand, so he asked him why. The husband replied, "Because I married the wrong woman."

Far too many couples today feel that marriage has turned into too much trouble, like the man who said, "My wife and I were happy for twenty years. And then we got married."

Friend, when God established marriage, He established it to last. It is



The absence of a kingdom purpose for marriage makes it appear as if many couples have been married by the secretary of war rather than the justice of the peace.



only when we have removed ourselves from His purpose for our relationships that we face the untimely unraveling of what was meant to be permanently satisfying.

A young girl was entertaining herself by playing with her grandmother's hands. When she asked why her grandmother's wedding ring was so large and gaudy, the grandmother sighed and then smiled and said, "Child, it's because when I got married, rings were made to last."

The problem today is that we have transposed the benefit of marriage with the goal, so that when the benefit—happiness—is not working out, we quit and move on, or we resign ourselves to living a life of unhappiness. A large percentage of marriages end in divorce, and many couples who remain together do so out of economic or practical constraints, not love and a shared purpose. Again, kingdom couples share a purpose, not just passion. Emotions change, but the purpose remains and is what can tie two people together until death do they part.

Most people subscribe to the popular notion of marriage that begins when two people fall in love and share an emotional experience identified by chills, thrills, and butterflies. With eyes only for each other, the infatuated pair

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*Marriage is not merely
 a social contract; it is a
 sacred covenant. It is not
 simply a means of looking
 for love, happiness,
 and fulfillment.*

promise undying love at the altar only to discover that after they say "I do," they just don't anymore. Divorce seems like the only way to forge a truce. In fact, many men and women tell their biggest lies on their wedding days. They promise to "love, honor, and cherish" in sickness and in health, for richer or poorer, for better or worse, for as long as they both shall live. Then, before long, they are divorced or wish they were. If religion is part and parcel of the relation-

ship, many couples will stay together for the sake of the kids. Yet they do so in loveless environments punctuated by conflict, selfishness, and the opposite of the true image of God.

When children grow up in loveless homes, they don't learn the crucial lessons necessary to develop good self-images now and to build strong marriages

for themselves later. When kids witness their dads coercing or demanding submission from their moms, they take on a warped definition of manhood and womanhood, which often results in poor behavior and communication later in life.

Our marriages today are crumbling at such a high rate not because we no longer get along but because we have lost sight of the blessing tied to biblical marriage. Marriage is not merely a social contract; it is a sacred covenant. It is not simply a means of looking for love, happiness, and fulfillment. Those things are important; in fact, they are critical. But they are not the most important or the most critical. Yet because we have put second things first, as important as second things are, we are having trouble living out either. When God's purpose and principles for marriage are undermined, His image becomes distorted, and our ability to influence others on God's behalf erodes.

Kingdom couples must view marriage through God's kingdom lens. A *kingdom marriage* is defined as "a covenantal union between a man and a woman who commit themselves to function in unison under divine authority in order to replicate God's image and expand His rule in the world through both their individual and joint callings."

A Lasting Tribute

Victoria's father died when she was only one. Raised in a single-parent household, Victoria didn't have a model of marriage to follow. Her relationship with her mom was strained at the best of times, and they were completely estranged as she grew older. Tossed here and there to different places and people, Victoria grew up in a contradictory world that provided little direction and consistency. What hope would she have of finding a happy home?

At the age of eighteen, Victoria faced new responsibilities. She was crowned Queen of England, something few people expected, since she wasn't first in line for the throne. However, the two men before her had died, and she found herself receiving a title at a time when it meant precious little. The English monarchy was in question, carried no real influence, and sat precariously on a line between honor and contempt. It was the early 1800s,

and one of the wealthiest and most powerful nations in the world had a teenager as its queen.

Yet just a few years later, Victoria married the man who would help her change the face of the monarchy for good. His name was Albert, and funny enough, *she* proposed to *him*. (Since she was the queen, he was not allowed to propose to her.) They soon married, and her diary and accounts reveal that they were deeply in love from the start. Later she wrote, “Without him everything loses its interest.”¹

Their marriage stayed strong and lasted until Albert’s untimely death in his early forties. Yet even though it was short, what their marriage produced was nothing short of remarkable. It not only strengthened Victoria’s rule, as Albert became his wife’s chief adviser and promoter, but it also expanded the dominion and rule of their nation throughout the rest of the continent through their children. Victoria and Albert raised their children with a kingdom mind-set.

German by birth, Prince Albert was considered an invading foreigner and “British interloper” by most. Yet he became a respected leader in the nation as he honored Victoria’s position and strength while seeking the good of her career and nation through his influence in political and domestic issues.² The view of the monarchy completely changed by the end of Queen Victoria’s reign, and it came to be known as a powerful tool for good for the land. The nine children the couple raised likewise went on to increase the reach of that good into countries near and far.

Each of their nine children, and many of their forty-two grandchildren, married into royal families. This included a German empress and queen of Prussia, a king of England, a grand duchess who was a champion of women’s causes and a promoter of female nursing, a cofounder of the Red Cross who also married into German royalty, the wife of a governor general of Canada, a Canadian commander in chief, and various other influential leaders.³

While it is widely purported that Victoria valued her marriage far more than she valued her parenting role,⁴ she and Albert took their duties to pass on their dominion and legacy seriously, and they were effective. In that, and much more, their marital success contributed to the success not only of England’s

citizens but also of people throughout the world who were positively impacted by the improvements in women's rights, social services, and the attention to peace their leaders sought.

But what happened after their marriage ended impresses me most about the love and strength of their union. Following Albert's untimely death, the queen showed him the greatest honor any wife could give. Victoria was still young when widowed, and she could have had any royal suitor in the world. Yet she chose to remain in mourning over the loss of the love of her life. For four decades, Queen Victoria clothed herself daily in black, staying true to the memory of her marriage even after death had parted them. Many thought her grief was excessive, but Victoria's love for Albert demanded nothing less. I have found no greater testament to a spouse's love than what the queen unwaveringly gave to her prince.

Queen Victoria and Prince Albert shared the fruit of happiness in marriage despite the obvious challenges of a large family, the pressures of duty and office, and certain male-female sensitivities resulting from her superior role. Yet they did it all successfully while carrying out the mission of expanding their dominion and influence upon the world.

As followers of the one true King over all, we should seek to honor each other no less, to love each other no less, and to expand God's dominion and rule no less through all we do in our marriages.

The King and His Kingdom

The key to influencing our society and world with lasting impact is found in solidifying biblical marriage in the way God intended. It starts with both wife and husband reflecting God and His image and modeling that reflection within the roles and responsibilities of their union. This begins with a correct understanding of God's kingdom and their responsibilities in it.

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*We should seek to honor
each other no less, to love
each other no less, and to
expand God's dominion
and rule no less through all
we do in our marriages.*

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Yet because the body of Christ in America has focused much more heavily on buildings, programs, and entertainment, far too few have a full understanding of God's kingdom or what biblical commitment looks like.

To gain some background, let me begin by stating that if you are an American, you are most likely an American because you were born here. If you are a part of the kingdom of God, it is because you have been born again

into His kingdom through personal faith in the death, burial, and resurrection of the sinless Savior, Jesus Christ.

Understanding the Kingdom with regard to your marriage is the key to understanding the Bible. The unifying, central theme throughout the Bible—from Genesis to Revelation—is the glory of God and the advancement of His kingdom.

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*Understanding the
 kingdom with regard
 to your marriage is the key
 to understanding the Bible.*
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When we lack an integration of the kingdom theme in our Bible study and application, the Bible becomes a collection of disconnected stories that are great for information and inspiration but seem unrelated in purpose, direction, and contemporary relevance. Scripture exists to highlight God's movement in history. It shows us the connection of the Kingdom. Fully grasping this concept makes this several-thousand-year-old manuscript relevant to our day-to-day decisions. The Kingdom is not only then; it is also now.

The closer God and His rule are tied to the definition of marriage, the more order, productivity, and fulfillment are experienced in our marriages. The further away God and His rule are, the more chaos occurs in the home.

What is the kingdom? Throughout the Bible, the kingdom of God is His rule. The Greek word used for "kingdom" is *basileia*, translated "rule" or "authority." Any kingdom consists of three crucial components: First, there is a ruler; second, a realm of subjects who fall underneath this rule; and third, the rules of governance. God's kingdom is the authoritative execution of His comprehensive governance over all creation. His kingdom is all-encompassing. It covers everything that exists.

The universe we live in is a theocracy. *Theos* refers to God, and *ocracy*

refers to rule. A kingdom perspective means that the rule of God (theocracy) trumps the rule of man (homocracy). Scripture expresses it this way: “The LORD has established his throne in heaven, and his kingdom rules over all” (Psalm 103:19, NIV).

God’s kingdom is larger than the temporal, governmental, and social realms that make up our world. It is not confined to the walls of the church in which we call on His name in a corporate setting. The kingdom is both now (Mark 1:15) and not yet (Matthew 16:28). It is not only near (Luke 17:21) but also far (Matthew 7:21). Jesus spoke to the heavenly origin of His earthly kingdom shortly before His crucifixion, when He responded to Pilate,

My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, then My servants would be fighting so that I would not be handed over to the Jews; but as it is, My kingdom is not of this realm.
(John 18:36)

God’s kingdom consists of covenantal institutions that include the family, the church, and civil government (the state). God rules them all, and each is accountable to Him and His standards as their sovereign, regardless of whether they recognize that rule. Failure to function under His authority produces chaos and consequences similar to what Adam and Eve experienced in the garden and what we see all around us today.

The foundation of civilization is the family, and the foundation of the family is marriage. Therefore the destruction of marriage naturally results in the destruction of civilization, which is why it is critical that we make strengthening marriages and families an integral part of the church’s mission.

All three covenantal institutions (family, church, and civil government) were designed to operate on a standard of absolute truth. We see this show up first in the garden when God told Adam and Eve that they could eat freely

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All three covenantal institutions (family, church, and civil government) were designed to operate on a standard of absolute truth.

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from any tree *except* the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. God wanted His revelation and not human opinion to be the basis and foundation for their relationship. When they ate of this tree, they removed themselves from the absolute nature of God's command, ushering reason into their future equations. As a result, today we must be careful to always place our reasoning underneath the umbrella of absolute, revealed truth. Truth is fundamentally God-based knowledge. This standard of truth is nonnegotiable, transcending cultural, economic, belief-based, and situational lines.

Not only does the Kingdom agenda operate on this foundation of absolute truth, but it also operates under the only all-inclusive principle presented to us for understanding the work of God and His kingdom. This principle is His glory. Romans 11:36 says that "from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen."

Glory denotes significance and value. Since everything originates from God, takes place through God, and goes to God, God's glory exists intrinsically in Himself. Whether we ascribe glory to God or not is irrelevant to the amount of glory God has. His glory is already fully present in Him. Yet the degree to which we personally experience and access God's glory in our lives, our marriages, and our homes is found in the extent to which we align ourselves under His comprehensive rule. When we align our lives under God and His rule, He

radiates and magnifies His glory to, in, and through us. We experience the abundant life and abundant marriages Christ came to secure on our behalf (John 10:10).

The number one way to bring God glory is by surrendering to His sovereign rule. This acknowledges His supremacy over every area of our lives. When we operate in our marriages based on these principles of the Kingdom agenda, we are

free to experience God's hand of blessing and His promise to work all things together for good (Romans 8:28).

Conversely, when we do not operate according to God's kingdom and His rule over our lives, we limit our opportunity to experience His hand working

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*For the Kingdom agenda
 to be made manifest in
 your marriage, it calls for
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 and say under God's rule.*
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all things together for good. This is because we have chosen to define God according to our purpose rather than His. But God will be defined by no one but Himself. It is the rule of God (theocracy) and not the rule of man (homocracy) that is paramount. If God's kingdom is comprehensive, as we have seen, so is His Kingdom agenda. The *Kingdom agenda* may be defined as "the visible manifestation of the comprehensive rule of God over every area of life." For the Kingdom agenda to be made manifest in your marriage, it calls for aligning all you do, think, and say under God's rule. When that is done, you will experience the fruit of all the good that God has planned for you.

The reason so many of us are struggling as believers is that instead of fulfilling *His* agenda, we want God to bless *our* agendas for our marriages. We want God to okay our plans rather than our fulfilling His. We want God to bring us glory rather than our bringing Him glory through honoring the marriage covenant as He intended it.

The Purpose of Marriage

God established marriage in a perfect environment. In fact, marriage came before sin. God created the first family and gave them His blessing, His commission, and His image:

Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. God blessed them; and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth." (Genesis 1:26–28)

As we see from the outset of this foundational passage on marriage, Adam and Eve were to reflect the triune image of God—unity in the midst of diversity. An image mirrors that which it reflects; it doesn't add to, take away from,

or distort. God created humanity as His mirror and called for that mirror to reproduce more mirrors through marriage. The marriage union—made up of male and female—most fully expresses who God truly is, and it is the most comprehensive manifestation of His image.

Our goal as married couples is not only to mirror God in the visible realm predicated on His reality in the invisible realm, but also to transfer the perfection of that image to our children as we raise kingdom kids. Simply put, the mission of marriage is to manifest and replicate the image of God in history, as well as to carry out His divinely mandated dominion (“let them rule”). Dominion essentially means ruling on God’s behalf in history so that history comes underneath God’s authority. The blessings God promised, and that we so desire to experience in marriage, were to be the outgrowth of men and women fulfilling God’s purpose of reflecting His image and managing together His creation under His rule. Happiness is to be a benefit of a strong marriage but not the goal. The goal of marriage is to reflect God through the advancement of His kingdom on earth. Happiness occurs as an organic outgrowth when this goal is pursued.

The Dominion of Husband and Wife

In Genesis 1:28, God gave Adam and Eve the commission to rule. Understanding this passage is critical to the success of a kingdom marriage. To do so, let’s look at the historical context within which the family was first placed.

God’s creation of humanity came after the rebellion of Satan as a way of setting the human race to rule over God’s created order. We see this in Psalm 8:3–6:

When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers,
 The moon and the stars, which You have ordained;
 What is man that You take thought of him,
 And the son of man that You care for him?
 Yet You have made him a little lower than God,
 And You crown him with glory and majesty!
 You make him to rule over the works of Your hands;
 You have put all things under his feet.

The commission to “let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth” (Genesis 1:26) was partnered with the command to “subdue” the earth (verse 28). In formal theology we refer to this as the *Dominion Covenant*.

The backstory to this covenant was the rebellion of Satan against the kingdom of God, which resulted in the banishment of Satan and his fallen angels to earth prior to their permanent incarceration in hell. Humankind, and the institution of marriage, was specially created for people to have a relationship with God and each other that would result in a demonstration of God’s greater glory and the superiority of His kingdom through humanity. This goal and the blessings connected to it could only be achieved, however, if the marriage relationship operated according to its divine design, which explains why Satan didn’t attack Adam until he was married.

God established a kingdom on earth that would rule over and defeat the kingdom of Satan. When Christ comes to create His millennial kingdom, it will be the final, triumphant declaration of God’s glory. Satan will then be locked up during that time to reveal his ultimate defeat and judgment (Revelation 20:1–3).

Yet, for now, God has issued a purpose for you and me—and for married couples especially—to harness and rule a part of His creation. Every person was created with that divine intent, and every marital union exists to pass down that intent to the next generation. In summary, the marriage relationship is to rule and replicate the image and kingdom of God in history.

When God established the first family and gave them dominion to rule, He stated that He would not rule independently of them. Our decisions on earth would impact His decisions from heaven (Ephesians 3:10). God did this for one reason: to demonstrate to Satan and his minions that He can do more to manifest His glory through lesser creatures than through the once shining star.

We often think that a battle is taking place between God and Satan these days. But there is no battle going on between them. No battle can exist between the Creator and a created one. That would be similar to me saying I’ll take on

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***Dominion essentially
means ruling on God’s
behalf in history so that
history comes underneath
God’s authority.***

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Manny Pacquiao in the ring. Sure, we both might step forward to fight, but I'd be out like a light at the first punch.

Satan, a created creature, is no match for the all-powerful Creator. That's no fight. Yet what God did establish was the opportunity for inferior creatures—human beings (Psalm 8:5)—to demonstrate that in this spiritual battle, even we can win when we operate according to God's kingdom rule. We are in an ongoing battle, and Satan has had thousands of years to perfect his punches. He likes to target married couples first, since we ultimately reflect the union of Christ with the church, as well as pass down the image of God to the next generation. As kingdom couples, we have been cast in a cosmic conflict to manifest God's rule in history for the advancement of His kingdom and the reflection of His glory.

God has delegated the managerial responsibility for ruling on earth. We hold that responsibility. Yet keep in mind that He has not turned over *absolute* ownership of the earth to us. By turning over the management to us, He has established a process, within certain boundaries, wherein He respects our decisions even if they go against His own, or even if those decisions are not in the best interest of that which is being managed. As a result, we either experience blessing or the consequences of poor decisions.

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God has delegated the managerial responsibility for ruling on earth. We hold that responsibility.

God is the ultimate owner over all. But He has delegated management duties, under His sovereignty, to us. Your decisions as a couple regarding both how you relate to each other and how you reflect God to others through your union directly affect the quality of life you experience. The tragedy for most couples is that they have followed suit with Satan,

seeking ownership rights, not just management responsibilities. As owners, couples go outside of God's rule and make decisions based on their preferred will or desires. And like Satan, they experience the distance and conflict he did when he was booted from God's presence.

What that means is that you can have a happy marriage or a miserable marriage depending on whether or not you exercise your rule as a reflection

of God's image. God isn't going to make you rule according to His rule. He isn't going to force you to have a productive and fulfilling relationship. He established marriage and its purposes, but you have the option of living by those purposes or not.

Frequently the well-being of a marriage is determined by whether a man and a woman are reflecting God's image in their individual roles. Once that mirror shatters or even cracks, the reflection of the relationship breaks with it. Nearly every time there's a family breakdown, it is the result of one or both spouses operating outside the covenantal bonds of marriage. They are modeling a broken mirror. As a result, they experience less of God's favor.

Satan either tries to get us to relinquish our management and hand it over to him by deceiving us into believing that he has authority, or he tries to get us to manage poorly based on our own judgments and distorted worldviews. He often does this through the promotion of conflict in our relationships, or through the enticement of ungodly choices.

When we as couples fail to align ourselves under God's kingdom rule, the battle lines are drawn.

When we as couples fail to align ourselves under God's kingdom rule, the battle lines are drawn.

Self-centered viewpoints like those create tension in a marriage. But the problems and challenges that marriages face should cause us to seek and apply the power of God, not divorce our spouses.

I've been the chaplain for the NBA's Dallas Mavericks for more than three decades. I enjoy a good game of basketball as much as the next person. And I'm pretty good at playing basketball—pretty much unstoppable . . . when I play alone. When unopposed, I can make any play and grab nothing but net. Yet in my younger days when I had an opportunity to play against the former Mavs star forward, Mark Aguirre, I quickly discovered I wasn't that great at basketball after all. The true test of my ball skills came only when I faced opposition.

So it is with marriage. But conflict, struggle, challenge, and differences shouldn't destroy our union; they should show the power of Christ within us. Jesus never asks you as a married couple to do what He has not already given

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*When we as couples fail
to align ourselves under
God's kingdom rule, the
battle lines are drawn.*

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you the ability to do (Philippians 4:13). Marriage is one of the greatest ways you can show the difference that Jesus Christ makes. You can reflect the glory of God and the unity of the Trinity through your shared purpose, honor, and love as a true kingdom couple. When you do that, you will not only have a love story for the ages, like Queen Victoria and Prince Albert, but you will also expand God's dominion and rule on earth through your marriage and your legacy. The bottom line is that marriage is a kingdom concept, not merely a social one.

When my wife, Lois, and I met, fell in love, and began to discuss marriage, a large part of our planning revolved around how God could use our relationship to bring Him glory and serve His kingdom. Since we were both committed to Christ and were called to serve Him, it was natural to include God's kingdom purpose as the defining centerpiece of our relationship. This is the orientation God wants every couple to enter marriage with. The key question is this: How can our marriages reflect God's image and advance His kingdom? As that question is answered, our marriages can expect the blessings and joy that we so deeply long for.

It was clear in the establishment of marriage that God wanted the institution sovereignly under His control and existing for His purpose. Thus, it was God who created man. It was God who communicated to man His Word. It was God who revealed the need in man for a woman. It was God who created the woman from the man. It was God who brought the woman to the man. So it was clearly God's intent that He never be left out of marriage, but rather be the definition of it.