

*A Remnant
of the
Spirit*

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with Victor Hall

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A REMNANT OF THE SPIRIT

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CHAPTER 1

Finding comparability through offering

In the book of Proverbs, the wise man marvels at ‘the way of a man with a woman’. Prov 30:19. In this volume, we embark on a practical journey to discover a *model* for *finding comparability*. The Scripture speaks of Eve as a helper *comparable* to Adam. How does the miracle of Christian love draw a man and woman together so closely they become one? Matt 19:6. The prophet Malachi refers to receiving a

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remnant of the Spirit. By this means a couple are empowered to find true comparability. Mal 2:15.

A remnant of the Spirit is that portion God desires to give us. This does not mean that it is minute or small. Rather, it is describing the action of God to give of Himself, to us. We remember the words of Jesus in the book of John, 'God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.' John 4:24. Marriage is a relationship of worship. First, a couple acknowledges the worthship of God and attributes worship to Him. Second, individuals understand and attribute worth to each other. The practical outworking of our worship is a culture of offering.

Paul wrote, 'Christ, who through *eternal Spirit* offered Himself'. Heb 9:14. Eternal Spirit is the capacity of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, to give to one another. We, like They, abide in one Spirit. 'The one who joins himself to the Lord is one Spirit with Him.' 1 Cor 6:17. Hence our capacity to fellowship together in the Lord and the preservation of our unity is empowered through eternal Spirit. This is how two can become one flesh, and Jesus could say, 'What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate'. Matt 19:6. When we receive a remnant of the Spirit, 'love is perfected with us ... because as He is, so also are we in this world'. 1 Cor 13:12.

A comment to distinguish the role of the Holy Spirit, as distinct from our topic of receiving a remnant of the Spirit, may also help frame our discussion. 'The Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things.' John 14:26. The Holy Spirit is the *agency* of that portion God desires to give us. When

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we receive a remnant of the Spirit, we can testify ‘now I know in part, but then I will know fully’. 1 Cor 13:12. The Holy Spirit guides a couple’s formation into one new house, whereby a man and woman abide in one Spirit with each other, and with God.

What is the difference between finding someone *compatible*, and a *helper comparable*? Is it the sovereign action of God to intervene and join two individuals in one new *comparable* house? Can we know the difference between worldly romance, and the perfect love of God? We believe the answer is, ‘yes’, we can know the difference. As we receive a remnant of the Spirit we are empowered toward Christian marriage. In the first two chapters, we will step through the theological principles of finding comparability through *offering*. In chapter three, we will cover the practical issues of a man and a woman meeting. Every Christian couple should aspire to godly marriage. In so doing, they must reorient through the cross, and thus find comparability. A couple must orientate themselves to genuine offering and a commitment to one another. In sanctification and honour they learn to appreciate the grace in the other.

The prophet Malachi admonished the house of Israel that only the sovereignty of God could join man and woman in comparability. No longer upholding the Lord’s holy covenant of marriage, the nation of Israel was rebuked by Malachi for dealing *treacherously* with one another, their wives and with God Himself. Two fundamental covenants were broken as Israel sought to marry daughters of foreign gods and ‘put off’ their wives: the covenant of the fathers, and the covenant of marriage. Only through the rest and peace of

offering, can man and woman receive a *remnant of the Spirit* and be made together as one, by God. Mal 2:10-15.

The covenant of the fathers

Malachi asked of God's people, 'Why do we deal treacherously with one another by profaning the *covenant of the fathers* ... Judah has married the daughter of a foreign god'. Mal 2:10,11. The covenant of the fathers refers to the law passed down to the nation of Israel by Moses. The Lord instructed His people not to take brides from, or give their daughters to, the nations they encountered as they followed Him. We can apply this principle in society today to represent all people who aren't Christian. 'You shall make no covenant with them ... nor shall you make marriages with them. They will turn away your sons from following Me, so that they may serve other [foreign] gods.' Deut 7:1-3. We live in hope that all men and women will hear the voice of the Lord and walk in His ways, but until they do, 'do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers'. 2 Cor 6:14.

Paul further explains, 'What agreement does Christ have with Belial [a foreign god], or what part does a believer have with an unbeliever?' 2 Cor 6:15. God's holy institution of marriage cannot be entered into unless both man and woman faithfully profess the cross of Christ as the centrepiece of marriage. It is impossible to find *comparability* in marriage without the cross as the centrepiece. The worldly notion of *compatibility* is best left to the world.

Romantic compatibility

What is the difference between Christian comparability in marriage and the deception and treachery of compatibility? The psalmist wrote, 'I behold the *treacherous* and loathe them, because they do not keep Thy word'. Psa 119:158. We would say, at this point, that pursuing compatibility can deceive us into dealing treacherously with each other and with God.

Compatibility can best be described as the common representation of romance in the world today. Couples often struggle between the negative statement 'we have nothing in common', and the positive statement 'opposites attract', and finally settle for a midpoint, labelling themselves 'compatible'. The possible deception of relating this way is that one or both people trade off who they are for the sake of compatibility. This form of meeting can also occur when we evaluate someone's suitability in a relationship, based on our expectations of a partner, rather than appreciating the true godly predestination of this other. It's as the old adage goes, 'We only see what we want to see'. A couple meeting this way deals treacherously with one another, because as the relationship proceeds, pressure increases to maintain the expectations of the other. Neither person is free to grow in the hope of their unique calling. They fail to 'keep Thy word'.

Ultimately, a compatible relationship employs a *status quo* dynamic, whereby the individuals' identities become malleable for the sake of keeping the peace. In contrast to this, a comparable couple are learning to understand, appreciate and honour the full identity of each other. They begin to foster and treasure a culture where each

person can offer fully, according to gift and grace, without hindrance. At this point, the whole burnt offering is put on the altar. Malachi's exhortation was to, 'Bring the whole tithe [offering]'. Mal 3:10. 'Then the people [couple] rejoiced because they had offered so willingly [without compatibility-driven hindrances], for they made their offering to the Lord with a *whole* heart.' 1 Chron 29:9.

Ironically, this mode of relating is not dissimilar to the 'friendship' and 'courtship' phases of a Christian courtship, where each person is fundamentally assessing the other person in terms of how they add to them or make them feel. This is a valid aspect of a relationship, because often we are unresolved on the qualities and characteristics we are looking for in a partner. However, meeting from this basis of seeking compatibility only, can produce a flawed outcome. Both individuals need to be given to prayer and seeking the Lord's grace and guidance as they begin to know the other person. They should feel comfortable standing up in their full identity, and confident that they are meeting the other in their full identity. The potential danger is that compatibility forms the basis of marriage, and then continues after the wedding day in what will prove itself to be a crippled *trading culture*. If, however, an appropriate phase of finding true comparability occurs, the couple will avoid the 'flood' of romance that threatens to sweep them down a compatible path.

Christian comparability

Is there romance in Christian marriage? Of course there is! But romance based on comparable meeting in true identity yields greater joy than romance based on ever-appeasing compatibility.

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Comparability facilitates true meeting without any form of *conquering*. If either the man or the woman perceives that their worth, acceptance or validation depends on ‘ruling’ the relationship, a pursuit of control results. Control exists when, either openly or subconsciously, the expectations of the man or the woman force the other to surrender their godly identity and initiative. The person insisting for acquiescence may be driven by fear that the relationship will fail, or perhaps be insecure in their developing role as either head or helper. Where individuals attempt to validate themselves by domineering over the other, this needs to be recognised. They need to lift their eyes to the Lord and cease striving. Otherwise, compatibility then *demand*s that ground be *yielded* in a so-called ‘mature’ synthesis. The trade-off between seeking to conquer, and yielding ground, moves the relationship to a parallel, law-based path.

Offering – sanctification and honour

In contrast, comparability enables two ‘born from above’ identities to make offering. Life is freely laid down to one another in full identity expression. A relationship founded in true meeting facilitates offering in the simplicity and security of identity. This can be an indication of a couple’s growing maturity. If the offering of either the man or woman is convoluted or hindered, they are still harbouring some vestiges of compatibility-based meeting. The best practical gauge as to whether or not this dynamic is occurring, is whether or not the attention and preoccupation of the couple towards their relationship is reducing the capacity and quality of their offering. Of course, proper attention and diligence must be

given to the growing courtship. The man and woman should seek advice and feedback from those who are deaconing in their areas of service. Then, as the relationship proceeds and the couple begins specific courtship counselling, input and observations from their counsellors will be helpful. In his first epistle, the apostle John wrote, 'There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love'. 1 John 4:18. If the couple can't meet in full identity for fear of punishment (the demand that ground be yielded), they cease to put the whole burnt offering on the altar. Ex 9:18. It is the predestination of all Christians to become a 'chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation'. 1 Peter 2:9. Sanctification and honour must become the mode of offering if they are to be part of that royal priesthood offering up spiritual sacrifices.

House of the priest – Christ's house

It will be helpful to understand how a comparable husband and wife form a unique house within the church, the household of faith. The new house that a husband and wife form together becomes one family within the family of families that make up the house of the Son. It is important that we do not confuse our own individual house with the Lord's house. The church of the firstborn, the house of Christ, is the context of our priesthood. We suggest here that marriage does not of itself constitute a priesthood.

At the last supper we see the fulfilment, the consecration, of Christ's chosen generation as royal priests. As they partook of the passover meal, they were eating in the house of Christ, the house of the firstborn. This gives great meaning to Paul's statement, 'Christ was

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faithful as a Son over His house – *whose house we are*'. Heb 3:6. Our participation in communion, our eating of the bread and drinking of the wine, consecrates us as a royal priesthood. The temple of His body is the context of our 'priesting'.

Heirs together through offering

Our mode of fellowship together is founded in offering. 'You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood ... so that you may proclaim [*show forth*] the excellencies of Him.' 1 Peter 2:9. The defining work of a priest is to handle offerings and, in doing so, to show forth the wonder of God as He receives those offerings. Our basis for fellowship in marriage continues on the foundation of offering, whereby we seek to priest the life of God.

The disciple Peter links sanctification and honour with offering between *co-heirs* of the gospel of Christ. 'Husbands ... live with your wives in an understanding way ... and show her honour as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers will not be hindered.' 1 Peter 3:7. The unhindered offering of both husband and wife is paramount within Christian marriage. The word that Peter used in admonishing husbands to 'honour' their wives can also be translated 'value'. This draws an excellent picture of Peter's understanding of marriage. He is exhorting husbands to understand the *value* of their wives' offering as commensurate with their full identity expression. Our individual offering, as husband or wife, is representative of our unique identity, born from above. As we recognise and value the offering of our spouse, our love and respect for them continues to be 'perfected'. 1 John 4:18. In doing so, our mode of offering together is promoting an abundant 'grace of life'.

We will recall Jesus' words, 'Therefore if you offer your gift on the altar, and there remember that your brother [fellow-heir] has anything against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift'. Matt 5:23,24. If husbands and wives abide together, without mutual understanding and respect for the offering each other brings, they have 'something against each other'. While they continue to bring their own offering in this manner, they are not living comparably, and their 'prayers are hindered'. King David wrote, 'May my prayer be counted as incense before You; the lifting up of my hands as the evening offering'. Psa 141:2. When we consider Jesus' words, with David's description of our prayer ascending as the evening [burnt] offering as a backdrop, Peter's warning carries a clear imperative. Our comparability as co-heirs hinges upon our attribution of honour to the other. As we live in this mode of offering together, we effectively 'pries't the life of God and, in turn, receive the grace of His life.

Spiritual sacrifices

As we earnestly yearn to be found within His chosen generation, we can abide with those who form His house when He accepts our spiritual sacrifices. 'And coming to Him as to a living stone which has been rejected by men, but is choice and precious in the sight of God, you also as living stones are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up *spiritual sacrifices* acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.' 1 Peter 2:4,5. 'Coming to Him' describes us bringing offerings from our house to the one altar in the courts of His house. His altar, the place where His name is recorded, is the

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only context in which our offerings are acceptable and received. The context for receiving and offering sacrifices is the temple, even though our offerings are brought from our houses. This clarifies our understanding of the offering of our spouses. We must attribute value to their labour as they 'prepare [their] work outside and make it ready ... in the field'. Prov 24:27. For a married couple, there must be no 'altar' in their house (separate from the one altar) where they offer to God. Their life must be one of continually 'coming to Him', bringing acceptable sacrifices and participating within His holy nation.

The prophet Hosea draws a stark contrast between the nations of the earth and God's holy nation. 'Do not rejoice, O Israel, with exultation *like the nations!* They will not pour out drink offerings of wine to the Lord, their sacrifices will not please Him. Their bread will be like mourners' bread; all who eat of it will be defiled, for their bread will be for themselves alone; *it will not enter the house of the Lord.*' Hos 9:1,4. Rather than bringing acceptable sacrifices and coming into His house, the nations eat of their own bread and remain unsanctified. It is imperative that a comparable couple recognises that His house is the context for the priesthood of a chosen generation. This is the 'royal priesthood-holy nation' offering in His house. Our participation in the communion consecrates us as priests, who can righteously handle His offerings and continually testify that we are coming to Him.

Treachery opposing comparability

According to the prophet Hosea, Adam dealt treacherously with his wife. Even when she was deceived, he forsook his own headship

toward her. Malachi has amplified this as the intrigue and *mystique* of a 'daughter of a foreign god'. Mal 2:11. By 'mystique', we mean that charm or charisma associated with choosing the passing pleasures of sin, rather than enduring with the people of God. Heb 11:25. This is treachery opposing comparability. We deal treacherously with one another if we fail to meet in true godly identity. In doing so, we disregard sanctification and honour. Hence, 'the mystique of a daughter (or son) of a foreign god' may appear alluring and pleasurable, but will surely be passing. Paul admonished the Thessalonians to 'know how to possess [their] vessel in sanctification and honour, not in the passion of lust, even as the nations *who do not know God*'. 1 Thess 4:4,5. Without being sanctified by the Holy Spirit, those who do not know God live outside His will, unable to find His will. This is the meaning of the proverb, 'He who has no rule over his own spirit is like a broken down city without a wall'. Prov 25:28. Without empowerment from the Holy Spirit to rule our spirit and to perceive the lines of sanctification in both our life and our relationships, we find no governors or boundaries. Malachi warns the house of Israel not to be attracted to this romantic mystique because it can only ever result in a false, treacherous meeting. The wonder of Christian marriage, with husband and wife having been made comparable and remaining committed to offering, is that the single predestination of the house progresses from 'glory to glory' in the Lord. The couple shares the joy of enduring comparability throughout the journey of life.

The covenant of marriage

The second abomination for which Malachi rebuked the nation of Israel was that of breaking the covenant of marriage. Not only were the people allured by the mystique of unsanctified sons and daughters of foreign gods, but they were also putting aside their existing wives and husbands as a result! 'The Lord has been witness between you and the wife of your youth, with whom you have dealt treacherously [to break covenant with]; yet *she* is your companion.' Mal 2:14.

If we reflect on the very first marriage recorded in the Scripture (Adam and Eve), we can note how the couple dealt treacherously with the Lord and fell into sin. The key point to note is that Adam *and* Eve sinned *before* they ate of the fruit, because they stopped offering to each other in the cross. The prophet Hosea said, 'But like Adam they [the tribes of Ephraim and Judah] have transgressed the covenant; there they have dealt treacherously against Me'. Hos 6:7. Why is *Adam*, rather than Eve, nominated by the prophet? How did Adam deal treacherously with God? How did Adam and Eve deal treacherously with each other?

As the serpent came to Eve and planted the seed of doubt in her mind, 'Hath God said?', she should have immediately sought the counsel of her husband. Gen 3:1. However, she entered into a dialogue with the serpent by responding to him. She gave opportunity for the serpent's lie to take hold of her and deceive her. This is highlighted in Paul's statement to the Corinthians, 'Let your women be silent in the churches; for it is not permitted to them to speak, but to be in subjection, as the Law also says. And if they

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desire to learn anything, *'let them ask their husbands at home'*. 1 Cor 14:34,35. This is not a statement on male domination or female inferiority. Not at all! Paul is referring to the proper headship order of Christ. 'But I would have you know that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God.' 1 Cor 11:3.

There is provision from God for a man to lead his wife and family. This is the grace-authority of the headship order. Had Eve sought her 'husband at home', she would have found the wisdom of God through Adam's authority as her head. Of course, all women can be led of the Spirit and illuminated as they pray and seek the Lord. But, for Eve, this was a test of her faith and her offering in marriage.

The moment she entered into dialogue with the serpent was the moment her offering ceased, and a wedge was allowed between Adam and herself. We cannot forget that Adam and Eve lived for 3000 years in the garden before they ate of the forbidden fruit! This highlights how important an attitude of offering is for the *entirety* of marriage. Sadly, after they sinned, God said to Eve, 'I will greatly increase your sorrow and your conception. In pain you shall bear sons, and your desire shall be toward your husband, and he shall rule over you.' Gen 3:16. Had Eve maintained her offering and allowed God to continue building her as a comparable helper, she would have found the wisdom of God rather than having been deceived by Satan. Adam could have 'ruled over her' not for petty superiority, but for her protection according to the grace-authority of headship.

The sin of Adam

Not only did Eve break the covenant of marriage, but Adam also dealt treacherously with his wife. Hosea's prophecy to Ephraim and Judah likened their iniquity not to Eve's behaviour, but to Adam's! The wise man wrote, 'He who finds a wife finds a good thing, and obtains *favour* from the Lord'. Prov 18:22. The favour from the Lord is His wisdom and capacity to lead a wife and family. Adam's sin and treacherous dealing with Eve and the Lord was his failure to be proactive in their relationship and to continue to offer himself for his wife, in love. 'Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for it.' Eph 5:25. Adam's sin began when Eve's sin began – well before they ate the fruit. As Eve ceased offering and 'desiring towards her husband', Adam simultaneously ceased offering himself in love for his wife. He needed to intervene and avert her deception, but instead he did nothing. We can truly see now the futility and cowardice of his account to God. 'The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate.' Gen 3:12.

Jesus was very clear as He spoke with His disciples, 'I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for immorality, and marries another woman, commits adultery'. Matt 19:9. As the men of the nation of Israel put off their wives, ceasing to offer and find comparability, they broke the covenant of marriage. They dealt treacherously with each other, and with God. Malachi gives us the essential answer to truly finding, and equally as important maintaining, comparability through receiving a *remnant of the Spirit*. As a couple offer themselves to each other by eternal Spirit, they maintain comparability.

The rib for marriage

For a couple seeking comparability, acknowledging God's sovereignty over their joining is paramount. No endeavour of the man or woman, their families, or even their counsellors with them, can lead to comparability. For Adam and Eve, 'God made the rib (which He had taken from the man) into a woman. And He brought her to the man.' Gen 2:21. The rib symbolises the life of the man given to the woman. In this way, the couple who are unequal, can become comparable and thus be made one. The rib for marriage is the provision of the cross. 'So that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, thus establishing peace, and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross.' Eph 2:15,16. It is only when we are members of His body that the life symbolised in the rib is made available. As we offer ourselves to one another by eternal Spirit, we can participate in Christ's offering. Thus His life is transferred to us in the spirit of sanctification of honour.

Sanctification

Jesus said, 'For their sakes I *sanctify* Myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth'. John 17:19. The *sanctification* of our spirit, where we earnestly align our heart and mind with the Spirit of Christ, is an essential part of offering in marriage. Our preoccupation before marriage, when two unique predestinations exist, is to reveal the glory of Christ. 'For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God.' Col 3:3. Thus, we seek to priest the life of Christ. Once married, the measure of a comparable helper is her preoccupation to reveal the glory [predestined identity] of her husband. 'An excellent wife is the crown [glory] of her husband.'

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Prov 12:4. Thus, we need wisdom to maintain the sanctification of head and helper in the house of our marriage. Furthermore, relating to one another in sanctification and honour enables us to maintain our appointment as priests in the house of Christ.

Honour

The principle of *honour* refers to ‘raising up’ and ‘enabling’ by resurrection power. Stated simply, the notion of ‘honour in action’ means living accountably in relation to the name the Father has predestined for us. This is how Paul was able to testify, ‘I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God’. Gal 2:20. As the Holy Spirit enlightens us, according to the truth of who we are in Christ, we live commensurate with His naming and, therefore, live with honour. Now we can comment on Peter’s statement regarding honour in marriage. ‘Husbands, live together according to knowledge, giving *honour* to the wife as to the weaker vessel, the female, as truly being co-heirs together of the grace of life’. 1 Peter 3:7. Peter is not suggesting that the female is weaker physically or emotionally. Rather, she is weaker because she is the vessel of comparability, as opposed to the male who is the vessel of headship. Husbands give honour to their wives by acknowledging their re-orientation through the cross to comparability, with a single predestination of a house. Living in honour implies that the woman is finding strength in the cross, together with resurrection power, to become firstly a *paraclete* (Gr. helper) wife, and secondly a mother.

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The capacity of God to join man and woman together, ‘bone of bones and flesh of flesh’, is a miracle. Gen 2:22. New life is a miracle and the *Lord* makes all things new. Rev 21:5. After rebuking the house of Israel for their treachery, Malachi says simply, ‘But not one has done so who has a *remnant of the Spirit*’. Mal 2:15. This is the key to our entire ‘finding comparability’ proposition.

CHAPTER 2

Empowered with a remnant of the Spirit

The volume *Finding Comparability* (Hall et al.) thoroughly steps through and explores our understanding of comparability. Our goal here is to observe that obtaining a remnant of the Spirit is the *means* to finding comparability. Receiving that portion which God gives of Himself, enables us to abide together comparably, in one spirit. We need to answer such questions as: ‘How does a remnant of the Spirit

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help? How do we obtain a remnant of the Spirit? When, in the courtship process, should we seek a remnant of the Spirit? How does the process that the man undergoes, contrast with the process the woman undergoes, in receiving a remnant of the Spirit?

A summary of the process for finding comparability will be helpful in our discussion on the remnant of the Spirit. Based on the account in the book of Genesis chapter two:

1. There was no comparable helper found for Adam until God acted and fashioned [built] Eve from Adam's rib.
2. The rib of Adam (Adam being representative of all men) was availed, from which God built.
3. God's taking of Adam's rib (as if in a *moment*) whilst Adam slept, is representative of a *process*.
4. The process is one of *offering*, whereby Adam offered something of himself by which the Lord then built a helper comparable to him. This reiterates the importance of Adam's rib, as distinct from any other rib. His rib became his complete personification, which encapsulated everything intrinsic about him, to which Eve was built comparable. This is an essential point to understand. What Adam offered of himself became the precise measure (both the maximum and minimum) of his future comparable helper.
5. His rib is representative of his *predestination* (found in the will of the Father) and thus the predestination (singular) of his house. The woman, formerly of her father's house and her own predestination, finds the predestination offered by

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the man, and begins to cleave to it in faith. Hence, two predestinations become one.

6. The man rests in the peace and faith of his offering. He trusts that as he pours himself out in the same pattern in which Christ poured Himself out at Calvary for His bride the church, God will receive his offering and build a comparable helper accordingly. Thus the flesh of one becomes two.
7. God brings the helper to the man, and because she is so completely 'of him', he cleaves to the woman as if she is part of his very flesh. 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh.' Gen 2:23.
8. In the miracle of God joining a man and woman for marriage, the flesh and predestination of two (man and woman) becomes one house, while the flesh and predestination of one house becomes two (man and woman)!

The necessity of obtaining a remnant of the Spirit becomes apparent for the couple, when they perceive the truth that the entire process outlined above is beyond their capacity. 'For Adam there was not found a helper suitable for him.' Gen 2:20. As romantically 'compatible' as a potential partner may seem, comparability is the miraculous joining of man and woman in one predestination. This is only possible through God's workmanship. The man must enter the

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rest of offering, the 'deep sleep', having poured himself out, and trust that God will fashion the woman comparable.

Being made ready

Throughout the initial friendship and courtship viability phases of a relationship, it is unrealistic for the man to offer himself for the woman 'just as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her'. Eph 5:25. We need to understand the nature of Christ's offering on the cross as the substance of the man's offering from the point of private engagement. The process of Calvary was *more* than His offering for our sin. 'Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, by a *new and living way*.' Heb 10:19,20. The shedding of His blood was effective for the removal of our iniquity. Wonderfully, something 'of Christ', His essence, was made available that day on the cross. In a sense, His rib was offered for us, such that the church, the bride of Christ, could walk a new and living way unto perfection [comparability]. 'Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has *made herself ready*.' Rev 19:7. It is the essence of Christ, made available for us at the cross, to which we all hope to become comparable. This is how we are 'made ready'.

The journey of finding comparability for a man and a woman follows the same pattern as Christ and His bride. As the man humbly seeks to offer his predestination in the cross, God meets him there and pours out upon the offering. As a man, without fear, makes faithful offering of love toward a woman, a remnant of the Spirit is miraculously imparted to that man. The ground of his life, the complete predestination of his house, becomes the context in which

the woman can be made comparable; and with a remnant of the Spirit, the transaction is empowered. 'And I will give them *one heart*, and put a new spirit within them. And I will take the heart of stone out of their flesh and give them a heart of flesh, that they may walk in My statutes and keep My ordinances and do them.' Ezek 11:19,20. With a remnant of the Spirit, the couple can be made one. Malachi prophesies further, 'And what of the one? He was seeking a godly seed.' Mal 2:15. This statement gives context to the central 'finding comparability' purpose – that every house takes up a common mandate to 'be fruitful and multiply'. Gen 1:28. Every house made comparable with Christ seeks His mandate and yearns to build the house of Israel.

Standing in headship

The private engagement and ensuing betrothal period of a courtship provide an excellent opportunity for the male to genuinely touch the dimension of godly headship. Unlike Adam, who failed to stand in headship toward his wife, a husband must *lift his head* in sincere faith to find predestination from above, rather than look into the face of his wife for affirmation. It cannot be overstated how powerfully immobilising and belittling a woman's disapproval or agenda-based contention can be to her husband. Prov 21:19. As the woman lifts up her hands as the evening sacrifice, it is important she isn't doing so with wrath and doubting. 1 Tim 2:8. Even though this Scripture is speaking specifically of men, nevertheless a woman must relate in trust. She must pray for grace and faith to stand on the ground of her husband's predestination, and believe in his headship. The solution

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for men, however, is to lift their heads. This action is enabled by offering.

If we consider Job, and the tremendous wrestle he had in entering his predestination from God, we note that he overcame by lifting his head. God allowed Satan to strike Job's wealth, family and health. Yet in the midst of accusations, direction to alternate pathways and doubt from his friends, he found headship in the Lord. Eliphaz, Job's friend, accused him saying, 'Your own mouth condemns you, and not I; yes your own lips testify against you. Have you heard the counsel of God? Do you limit wisdom to yourself? What do you know that we do not know? What do you understand that is not in us?' Job 15:6,8,9. The entire book of Job accounts his bitter, piercing struggle to overcome the confusion of the world by availing himself of the wisdom of headship. In stressful, anxiety-driven phases of marriage, as the man desires to stand accountably for his house, he may be faced with statements from his wife similar to those faced by Job. 'What do you know that I don't know?' While she must continue to offer and seek comparability, the man must lift his eyes and find godly headship.

As the book concludes, Job responds acceptably to God and finds certain direction and immense blessing. 'I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear. But now my eye sees You. Therefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.' Job 42:5,6. If a man lowers his eyes from the wisdom from above, he must repent and search for God. Interestingly, Job's friends are instructed by God to bring their offering to Job. He was to pray for them and present their offering on their behalf, that it might be accepted, 'for the Lord had accepted

[lit. lifted up the face of] Job'. We can liken the headship of a man towards a woman, to Job's capacity to priest the life of God to his friends. A man must never attempt to seek affirmation or the predestination of his house by looking into the face of his wife. It is his responsibility to lift his eyes in headship and find His godly predestination from the Father. As he offers himself through the cross, he provides a ground of sanctification for his wife. Thus, she is able to be made comparable to him, standing on the holy ground of marriage. His wife must be able to look into his face and see the reflection of God's predestination for their house. In this way, a man's entire house is accepted before the Lord.

Building the house of Israel

Every helper is fashioned uniquely comparable to her husband, and to the predestination of his house. Furthermore, a common mandate for all families in the fellowship of Christ was established in the creation of male and female: 'be fruitful and multiply'. Gen 1:28. The word of the Lord to the remnant of Israel returning from Babylon restated the mandate, 'His servants will arise and build'. Neh 2:20. This word endures for all generations of Christians – arise and build the house of Israel.

'Two becoming one' is the formation of a new family, a new house, which has a *single predestination*. We should note here, that the single predestination of a house is of itself defined not only by the man, but also by the two becoming one. Four factors are at work: the particulars of the man's predestination, the particulars of the woman's predestination, the characteristic of her as his helper, and the distinctive nature of the house itself.

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‘The wise woman builds her house.’ Prov 14:1. The wisdom of a woman to build flows in the headship order of Christ: from Christ to the husband and then from the husband to his wife as a comparable helper. If we consider the account of Boaz and Ruth, we note that the woman is built comparable to her head, such that *she is capable of building the house*. ‘All the people who were in the court, and the elders, said, “We are witnesses. May the Lord make the woman who is coming into your home like Rachel and Leah, both of whom *built the house of Israel*”.’ Ruth 4:11. Indeed, the accounts of Rachel and Leah, and Sarah with Abraham, show us that the deepest motivation of these women’s hearts was to build the house of God. The blessing of the people to Boaz and Ruth was that Ruth would be made comparable to her husband such that she could build their house. Earlier in the book of Ruth, we read how she implores Boaz to spread his covering [garment] over her. We can parallel this entreaty to the Scripture from the book of Revelation, ‘He who sits on the throne will spread His tabernacle over them. They will hunger no longer, nor thirst anymore, nor will the sun beat down on them.’ Rev 7:15,16. The bride of Christ, the church, is protected by His covering and therefore dwells in a position ready to build. Ruth appealed for Boaz’s covering as her head so she could become comparable on the ground of his predestination and be in a position to build.

Take along a believing wife

In the miraculous building of a woman comparable to her husband’s predestination, her unique offering as an individual in the kingdom of God is not impeded. Every Christian, both male and female, can

confidently testify, ‘We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them’. Eph 2:10. From the single predestination of a new house, the principle of ‘works prepared beforehand’ manifests in three ways: the individual grace-ability of the man; the individual grace-ability of the woman; and the grace-ability of a man with a woman as his helper in his house. In the joining of man and woman, a woman’s predestination undergoes a reorientation through the cross. Her talent from the Father and grace from the Son do not cease to exist and are not stripped from her. The capacity to bring offering remains, but once built comparable to a husband, the woman’s context and opportunity to offer is found in proper submission to her husband as head.

Practically speaking, if her skills directly complement his work in the kingdom, she may literally work alongside him. Alternatively, if her talent and grace function is found in a different outlet, through proper submission to her husband, she is freed to offer accordingly. In both cases, she brings her offering onto the ground of the brethren. Furthermore, her offering is received by deacons of administrations according to their grace-authority. As she serves in this manner, she truly is a sister to her husband in his work, while maintaining her comparability as his wife. A couple can thus maintain their offering in the kingdom, assured that their house is contributing to the work of the body and the building of God’s house. ‘Two are better than one because they have a good return for their labour.’ Eccl 4:9.

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This explains the meaning of Paul's statement to the Corinthians, 'Do we not have a right to take along a believing wife?' 1 Cor 9:5. The word 'believing' in this case is properly translated 'sister'. Paul's understanding of a comparable helper as a sister-wife reflects the balance of a woman's submission to her husband's predestination and headship, with her individual offering according to talents and grace. In this way, a man and a woman can be considered a single serving 'unit' in the broader family of families. She need not grow anxious or fearful that comparability will be at a cost to her creativity, inspiration, skills or grace. True comparability is the bone of bone, flesh of flesh, joining of a husband and wife, such that their entire relationship serves as a foundation for offering.

Religious idealism or true comparability?

Can we truly find comparability? Considering all the principles laid down throughout chapter one, is comparability something we merely talk about theologically, or is it something we discover and live? Couples may well ask themselves, 'Are we in love? How do we know we're in love? How do we show we're in love?' Similar questions can be asked about comparability. We can rest assured and be encouraged that godly comparability is as attainable and rewarding as godly love between a man and a woman. What a joy it is that couples can be co-heirs together of God's grace and mandate.

Genuine meeting in identity and fellowship together in Christ's offering removes any religious mysticism from the process. In the next chapter, a range of practical issues associated with 'laying down' in the cross are raised, and comment made. As the couple engages and interfaces in the fellowship of offering, several tangible

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reorientations occur on the pathway to comparability. *True comparability is found without projecting religious idealism or synthesising compatibility.* When we discover the substance of the rib, grace comes to the ground of marriage.

No degree of personal striving aids the process. Nor does it help simply to have a sound understanding of the principles – except with genuine application. In finding comparability, a couple becomes one house and one flesh. In the same way that we needn't focus or concentrate on keeping our fingers or limbs attached to our body, a comparable couple needn't focus or concentrate on cleaving to one another! Once God builds a comparable helper, and the couple commits to each other to continue offering in the cross of Christ at the heart of their marriage, they simply are one house and one flesh. A sense of ease and peace prevails, as the couple abides together in sanctification and honour, living comparably in their united predestination. Comparability is in fact the essential element of godly love between husband and wife wherein each is set free from perpetually struggling in misaligned compatibility or religious idealism, to the freedom of offering and serving in the house of the Lord.

CHAPTER 3

Reorientation through the cross

In this final section, we will pose some questions that are representative of the type of questions a courting couple will raise as they orientate through the cross. Couples should take time to meditate and reflect upon the points of discussion that accompany each question, as they grow comparable together. As the Holy Spirit guides couples and illuminates questions in their hearts, these

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tailored topics will form the content of discussions with counsellors.

For a woman to be built comparable to her future husband, she must undergo a reorientation through the cross. The cross works in two principal ways. First, it cuts the woman free from any hindrances to the comparability process, some of which are listed below as questions. And, second, it provides grace for a marriage. The cross also encourages a capacity to worship one another and meet in true *koinonia*. By making practical observations and seeking adequate insight, a couple should be able to develop a testimony that answers the questions listed below.

Have we let go of immature or ‘teenage’ perceptions of romance and marriage?

If a relationship is formed between two immature individuals, characterised by unestablished, unsettled identities, it will be crippled. The uncertainty of identity fosters romantic perceptions of what a relationship should be, rather than a proper meeting and appreciation of the other person, their sanctity and their honour. As their capacity to ‘stand-up’ in their predestined identity matures, a gap starts to form between who they’ve previously presented themselves to be, and their emerging identity. This gap will become evident as the couple struggles to keep their relationship measured to romantic idealism.

For this reason, we can see the pitfalls of teenagers forming relationships. It will prove impossible to find comparability suitable for marriage. The maturity required to submit a relationship to the

refining process of the cross, truly testing its viability for a lifetime of marriage in the Lord, will not exist. Furthermore, when a relationship is formed between two people who are unequally yoked or unformed in their identity in the Lord, the foundation of their relationship will be the very essence of everything foreign to God.

To find comparability, all immature perceptions in the relationship must be eliminated, and the cross must be made the foundation. The couple must remove their preconceptions of what romance and marriage 'should' be and reorient towards serving and offering towards each other and within the church family. If these immature ideals are maintained, the couple will continue to perceive and mould each other into their false romantic perceptions. The couple will never truly meet and, more importantly, they will never find true comparability.

Is my testimony of this relationship one of mature growth and identity-based meeting?

At the point of finding comparability, the couple's testimony must be one of maturity and readiness to establish a house. Having laid down their relationship to undergo the process of the cross, they will have reached a point where they are truly comfortable and established in their roles as head and helper. The woman should be comparable such that she has made *his* predestination *hers*. They should now be beginning to walk together as one, bringing their offering to the same table. A woman comparable to a man is not then robbed of her unique gifts and graces, but rather continues to bring her offering as a sister on the ground of the brethren. Her submission, when offering, is to the grace-authority of the brethren

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who are deaconing in administrations. It is a myth that when a woman finds comparability, she then loses all grace and capacity by which she previously offered and which formed her identity in Christ. Rather, she brings such gifts and graces onto the ground of her husband, as an offering to join His predestination.

Have we let go of the desire to encompass the other and control the agenda?

A prominent hurdle that many couples face is overcoming the need to control and conquer the other when the pressures of life mount against them. In the fiery trials of life, a couple must have faith towards one another, their relationship, and God's leading in their lives. If a sense of striving for control enters the relationship (instead of faith in each other's commitment to their relationship and the Lord's will), offering will be replaced by trading and competition. Instead of giving ground or meeting rationally and relationally, they will end up competing to be right. They will not be willing to meet on holy ground and maintain the cross between them. The desire to conquer the other wars against finding true comparability. The couple must be in complete faith for their roles as head and helper. The woman must submit and trust in the man, and the man must lift his head to Christ, not looking into the face of his wife.

Do we still grow anxious? (Does she meet comparability with fear? Does he fear that she won't be comparable to his work?)

Fear for the future is a recurring obstacle for many couples. Couples who are anxious for the future have not yet fully laid their

relationship at the Lord's feet, and thus they revert to a mindset of seeking control and ultimately conquering the other. The man must find peace and rest, trusting the Lord to fashion his wife comparably. Fear that the woman won't become comparable may lead a man to attempt to force her into submission and form her according to his perception of a comparable wife. In turn, if the woman meets comparability with fear, she will mistrust the man. This is evidence that she has not yet fully negotiated and reorientated the relationship towards marriage. A couple must entreat the Lord to make them comparable. Although the future is not necessarily mapped out neatly and tidily, the couple can be in complete faith that the relationship rests in the will of the Lord.

Have we grown past romantic dreaming and centred the cross between us as our foundation?

The danger, particularly for the woman, is to develop a set of ideals to which she then tries to mould and measure the man. Instead of looking to the Lord to find comparability, she attempts to mould him into her romantic ideal of what she would like him to be. Rather, she must embrace who he is in the Lord. Likewise, the man cannot mould the woman into an 'ideal' he has contemplated as a perfect wife. It is impossible for the couple to truly meet and find comparability while such romantic fantasy is undergirding the relationship. The couple must come to a point where they are in complete faith towards the relationship. They have embraced each other for who they are in their God-given identity. They have made the cross the centre of their relationship and are willing to put it above their own desires.

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Has the woman found faith to be a *paraclete*, a true helper, to this man, rather than living by her ideal projection of a wife?

The woman must be in complete faith towards the relationship proceeding to marriage and then allow God to make her comparable to the man. True comparability can only be found with a remnant of the Spirit. The couple must be aware that finding godly comparability is beyond their human capacity. This is the miracle of God joining man and woman. The woman must find a degree of comparability which is so 'of the man' it is as if she has been taken from his very rib just as Eve was formed from the rib of Adam. This kind of comparability is at first inconceivable, but can be found when the relationship is completely cross-oriented and the couple are in faith that the relationship is the will of the Lord for their lives.

Once comparability is found, the couple can remain comparable while they continue to offer. When offering ceases, they will no longer be able to walk in one predestination, and will in turn lose comparability. This is the case for all couples desiring to establish a house. They can remain comparable for the duration of their lives as long as they continue to offer. Only the Lord can build a woman comparable to a man. Having received a remnant of the Spirit, the couple finds and maintains comparability sufficient for a lifetime of Christian marriage. If the woman is still trying to reinvent herself into the 'ideal' she has created in her mind or suspects her husband would like, she will never become a true *paraclete* or find and maintain comparability.