

# Biblical Roots



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## Old Testament

According to Sacred Scripture, God instituted marriage as the pinnacle of creation. On the sixth day, in the first creation story, the Book of Genesis tells us: “God created man in his image; in the divine image he created him; male and female he created them. God blessed them, saying: ‘Be fertile and multiply, fill the earth and subdue it’” (Genesis 1: 27-28).

In the second creation story, God says that “it is not good for man to be alone. I will make a suitable partner for him.” (Genesis 2:18). This suitable helpmate was formed from the very rib of man and thus woman was “flesh of his flesh” (Genesis 2:22-23).

Woman, then, is man’s equal in dignity and the one closest to his heart. Because man and woman were created for one another, “a man leaves his father and mother and clings to his wife, and the two of them become one flesh” (Genesis 2: 24). Scripture teaches that marriage is not a mere human institution, but something God established from the foundation of world.

Sin not only brought about a break with God, but it also ruptured the original communion between man and woman. Adam and Eve blamed each another for what had happened and were now embarrassed by their nakedness (Genesis 3:7-13). The Old Testament shows how sin affected the goodness of marriage. There is the polygamy of the patriarchs and kings. Moses allowed divorce because of the people’s “hardness of heart” (see Deuteronomy 24:1 and Matthew 19:8). Men and women did not treat one another with integrity, honor and love as God had intended. Nonetheless, while sin marred the goodness of marriage, it did not destroy it.

## New Testament

Christians are new creations in Christ, healed of sin and its effects. Marriage is also recreated and made new in Christ. Jesus tells us that in the Kingdom of God the permanent union of husband and wife that God originally intended can once more be realized (see Matthew 19:6-11). By the grace of the Holy Spirit, husbands and wives can now truly love and honor one another. St. Paul tells us that marriage bears witness to the indissoluble love of Christ for his Church. Thus, husbands should love their wives, “even as Christ loved the church and handed himself over for her to sanctify her” (Ephesians 5:25-26). Wives, too, are called to love their husbands as the Church loves Christ (see Ephesians 5:22-23). The Old Testament also shows how God taught his people to revere once more the institution of marriage. God’s covenant with his people was an image of the exclusive and faithful love of husband and wife. The prophets helped the people see that God had not intended husband and wife to be separated (See Hosea 1-3; Isaiah 54 and 62; Jeremiah 2-3 and 31; Ezekiel 16 and 23; Malachi 2:13-17). The books of Ruth and Tobit bear witness to fidelity and tenderness within marriage. The Song of Solomon shows how the love of a man and a woman mirrors God’s love for his people.

Because marriage is placed within the saving mystery of Jesus Christ, Catholics recognize it as a sacrament. It is a means through which husbands and wives grow in love for one another and for their children, become holy and obtain eternal life.

**For further reading:**

[Catechism of the Catholic Church, #1602-1617](#)