

FINDING  
*Comparability*

## FINDING COMPARABILITY

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# 1. Understanding comparability

Our aim here is to define the true foundation for Christian marriage, as opposed to the romantic idealism of our modern society. This requires that we examine the first marriage in the Scriptures, where God formed Eve as a comparable helper for Adam. 'And the LORD God said, "It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him".' Gen 2:18. This is the setting from which we take the word 'comparability'.

The endemic failure to understand Biblical comparability has left many believers powerless to resist the winds and tides of optimism and

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casuism<sup>1</sup> which drive us into parallel living, selfish alienation and finally, into marriage collapse.

### True and false romance

Because this short volume is an addendum to *Building a House*<sup>2</sup> let us revise what we said in that volume about true and false romance.

‘True romance is the elation that derives from the ‘worth-ship’ of the other. It is an appreciation of the mystery and mystique of the other. The desire of true romance is to *meet* the other, not to *conquer* the other. The individual holy ground of the other as a person is always accepted and appreciated and must never be violated. Unsanctified romance is entirely based in how we are made to feel by the appealing aspects of the other – ie do we discover ourselves, and are we personally empowered and driven to self-interest, by the appeal and attention of the other? This is what the Scriptures call ‘the passion of lust’. 1 Thess 4:5. Worldly romance is actually a form of mutual empowerment, where the two mutually feel they are ‘somebody’ because of the compatibility they find with one another.’

In contrast to the models of romantic ‘compatibility’ that are portrayed in our contemporary media, comparability is uniquely godly, and only possible where the two become genuinely one – both one flesh and one spirit. Matt 19:6; Mal 2:15.

### Comparability in the beginning

The account in the book of Genesis is the starting point. Gen 2:18-25. Adam is representative of *all* men, and the model of his marriage to Eve is clearly taken up in the apostles’ teachings, as we shall see. In the Genesis story, Adam enters into a sleep during which his comparable

1. The use of clever but false reasoning, especially in relation to moral issues.

2. *Building a House*, V J Hall, M A Wylie, D V Hall, 2004, Seedlife Publications, Forest Glen.

helper, Eve, is made from a rib taken from his side. At first, this appears to be an entirely unique occurrence, and one which has only symbolic meaning for us. However, when the woman is brought to the man, there is a prophetic announcement<sup>3</sup> that, in the generations to come, a man will leave father and mother to cleave to such a helper.

'I will make a helper *comparable* to him ... and Adam said: "This is now *bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh*; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man." Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and *be joined* to his wife, and *they shall become one flesh*.' Gen 2:18, 23,24.

What is announced here is that (although this first union is indeed unique) every other man who leaves father and mother, to cleave to a helper, will be joined and become one flesh in precisely this same way. A man and his wife will be comparable in exactly the same way as Adam and Eve. We might ask then, 'How is this possible?' And we conclude that this is something more than sexual union. The woman is taken *out of man*, and because of this he cleaves to her, and they become as much one as it is possible to be.

This explains why the apostle Paul so readily states that this marriage is the model for all marriages. Right in the centre of his instructions in the book of Corinthians, he writes, 'For man is not from woman, but woman from man. Nor was man created for the woman, but woman for the man.' 1 Cor 11:8,9. Paul is quite clear here. In our human birth, man is from woman. But Paul is stating that in the order that comes from God, the woman is from the man.

It remains, then, for us to examine how a Christian union between two people who did not come from the same father and mother can indeed

3. The statement about leaving father and mother is not attributed to Adam, in our translations, but may well have been part of his prophetic announcement.

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be one flesh. How do they find God's original order in the same mode as Adam and Eve?

Our inquiry focuses on the real meaning of *Adam's sleep* – which links with Christ's offering at Calvary – the real meaning of the 'rib', and the *way in which Christ now works* in both a man and a woman to reproduce this godly dimension of comparability. In a nutshell, the truth is like so. Adam actually entered the rest of offering, in which he yielded a *rib*, indicative of his essential person. This opened the possibility for the woman to be brought forth *from* his rib, within the same dimension of offering, and brought to him as a comparable helper.

Consider Paul's New Testament teaching in this light. 'For Adam was formed first, then Eve.' 1 Tim 2:13. Why make this obvious point? The context here in the book of Timothy, as in Corinthians, shows that Paul is applying the dynamics of the first couple to every marriage. Even though the formation of the first couple was unique, and pre-Fall, the order and glory of it was to be the '*tradition*' in all marriages. 1 Cor 11:2-16. And to strengthen the point, Paul also shows that any *corruption* of the marriage order will have the same effect as in the Fall. 1 Cor 11:4,5; 1 Cor 14:34,35; 1 Tim 2:8-15.

So the major objective of Christian marriage counsel is to assist couples in 'finding comparability', *as at the beginning*. In the creation order, as Paul teaches, Christ was Head of the man, and the man was head of the woman. 1 Cor 11:3. The woman was to be *from, of and for* the man, as a comparable helper. Our aim in Christian counsel is to declare this content and to walk with couples as they reverse the dynamics of the Fall, and find the grace-capacity to be established as new households in the fellowship that God offered in the beginning.

### When and how do couples find comparability?

We must ask, 'At what point would a courting couple be able to approach this matter of comparability, and how would they do so? Is it

achieved through prayer and counsel? Is it achieved by a sudden crisis, or slowly developed from the early stage of courtship?’

Experience teaches us that none of these is the case. It’s not a sudden revelation, and it’s not a slow osmosis, or a ‘blending’ into one another. Let us put it this way. In relationships that develop properly to Christian marriage, courtship leads to comparability which leads to engagement and marriage. If we leave the engagement and the wedding aside for a moment, there are two stages that have distinctive dynamics of their own. Courtship involves two people meeting and finding each other, where they consider the viability of their relationship. There is a clear point where they commit somewhat irreversibly to one another. Customarily, couples might see themselves as ‘engaged’ to be married, and in the community at large, they might announce this publicly.

What we propose here is that *at the point* where the couple are *privately* engaged, and *before* they proceed to public engagement and marriage, they are able to pursue the comparability spoken of in the Scriptures.

Thinking around this issue for a moment: what we all know from experience is that a courting couple believe they are comparable, from the beginning. However, their experience of one another is still based in self discovery, as two individuals who hope to be one. At the other end of the spectrum, a married couple is desirous of being comparable, and may be committed to it, but is not *made* to be so simply by getting married.

The point here is that comparability must be apprehended and negotiated by a couple who are committed to it, but who are not already bound to it, either by public announcement or marriage. What can be shown, both scripturally and from experience, is that a private betrothal phase – *beyond* courtship and *before* public announcement – is the period in which a couple negotiates, with or without counsel, the real nature of their covenant.

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Logic itself, and observation, show us the reality of what we are saying. When a couple are freely courting – meeting, discovering, sharing, enjoying, considering, reconsidering – they are not committed to the extent that they can negotiate a comparability that is akin, in any way, to Adam’s offering of a rib and Eve’s formation to be a comparable helper. Even where couples are left entirely to themselves, they will almost inevitably encounter a stage where the future is sufficiently certain as to be both desirable and frightening all at once. As the reality dawns, the stakes get higher. Differences and difficulties may seem insurmountable, and happiness may seem under threat. Commonly, romantic unreality will be used to ‘bridge the gap’. Or if both are committed to a good outcome, bargaining and consolidation of roles, cultures, expectations and ‘no go’ zones will progressively define what the relationship is, at the time of the marriage. In fact, the hidden covenants will define exactly what the two will be into the future. Marriage itself doesn’t change anything except the degree to which ones are bound to ‘work things through’, if indeed they can be worked through. Experience shows how unlikely and unsuccessful are the attempts at change *after* marriage.

### Comparability defines Christian marriage

The Christian ideal, drawn from the Scriptures, is profoundly clear. The couple – like Adam and Eve – must find comparability in Christ, and cleave as one flesh and one spirit, and this is itself the condition that defines them as husband and wife.

So what are we to do – those of us who have *not* found comparability, either before or since our marriages? The answer is clear. We cannot break the marriage and start again with someone else. We cannot claim that our partners are the wrong ‘rib’ or the wrong ‘head’. And nor can we say that it’s too late to make any change. Wherever we are when the word of repentance finds us, we must enter into the cross of Christ, and join the fellowship of His offering. This is where we find

resolution for our sin and failure, and where we rejoin the new and living way of cleansing and transformation.

While this small volume addresses the counsel that is offered to new couples, it is none-the-less applicable to any couple, in any condition whatsoever, where the call is the same – to make offering into Christ's death, where he brings forth that which is new. A key point here is that comparability is a new dimension. It is not fundamental to either the man or the woman, and it is not developed within the human interaction of friendship and romantic love. The substance of comparability cannot be confused with the strength of romantic love. Comparability is that which is uniquely formed by Christ, from the man, and in the woman, whereby they become a new family, with a predestination from the Father, as much as if God had ordained for these two to be married. Of course, God does not determine and ordain our future in that way. Rather, our genuine interaction with Christ, in the dimension of faith and offering, brings forth that which is the will of God, here and now, as much as if it were predestined before time. This is the mystery of faith, and describes how the will of God comes forth, without it simply being predetermined upon us.

As an overall program then, a period of roughly 3-6 months of private betrothal, in which comparability is pursued, should precede public engagement. The advantage of this approach is that the public engagement can be short (3-4 months, for wedding preparation). An allied matter, then, that needs working around is that a short engagement is too short for the wedding planning – this needs to commence earlier.

### Two phases in courtship development

As an overall model for Christian courtship, we have already implied that it falls into two distinctive phases. We'll call these 'courtship viability' and 'finding comparability'. In the first of these, marriageable adults are assessing, in relation to families, cultures, relationship and

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discipleship issues, whether they could have a viable future as a couple. In the second phase, they are pursuing the comparability proposition that defines covenantal marriage.

In terms of counsel, in the first of these phases, we have realised that input during courtship can really only be directed to individuals, with some minimal support of their activity as a couple. The two cannot really be addressed as a 'couple', other than in a very broad way, since they have not yet decided to be a couple. When a viable courtship leads to the point of a minimum commitment to a married future, it is then that the *specific* content of Christian *marriage* can be negotiated. In other words, it's when the couple is preparing to be 'privately engaged' that it becomes possible, and essential, to work through the matter of finding comparability. Until a private commitment is at least in view, the features of godly marriage can only be aspired to, and cannot actually be formed.

The reason for this is quite clear – viz. that genuine comparability as head and helper is a completely *new* dimension, one that is achieved by the dynamics of offering (joining the one offering of Christ) and not merely by further courting. In time, a new house can be formed according to a *single predestination* that is freely chosen, in faith, by two individuals. For both the man and the woman, comparability is a *new dimension* of capacity from the Father, through Christ – for the man has never been *head* to a woman, and the woman has never been a *comparable helper* to a man.

### Head and comparable helper

On this point, note that even though maturing sons and daughters respond to Christ's lordship and learn to be 'disciples' (and we could say, 'helpers'), neither is specifically prepared for what the Scriptures require of a head and comparable helper. A man will only ever be head to one woman – ie his wife – and a woman's comparability will only ever be expressed toward one man – her husband. To illustrate the

point, remember that a daughter relates to her father as her head, but she is never asked to be *comparable* to her father.

So the aspects of head and comparable helper are *new* dimensions, discovered through offering, as in the beginning. A man will leave father and mother, as Adam declared, to cleave to a comparable helper. So at the point of marriage, neither man nor woman continues to be defined by the context of father and mother in which each previously expressed identity, and manifested relational predestination.<sup>4</sup>

### The grace to establish a house

Headship is not merely a chain of authority, for in the fellowship of the Godhead, we find that the headship of the Father is able to *bring forth that which is new*. Headship *from* the Father, ‘*of whom* are all things’, is expressed through Christ, ‘*through whom* are all things’, in such a way that the Father of one Seed – the Lord Jesus Christ – names every new family *in* that one Seed. 1 Cor 8:6. ‘For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named.’ Eph 3:14,15.

Through our exercise of true faith (the faith of the Son), a substantial righteousness is imputed to one who believes, so that something which did not exist (this upcoming marriage, and family) is called into existence. Rom 4:17. This is what was effected by the pouring out of the Son’s life upon the Father’s offering – as carried in the symbol of ‘new wine’, throughout the Scriptures. The fullness of this mystery is embraced in the Father’s two statements: ‘Thou art My Son’, and ‘Thou art a priest forever’. Heb 5:5,6. Simply, we are to understand that in the fellowship of the mystery, in the begetting of the Son as the Father’s Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, He also became the Priest of

4. The difference, as well as the interrelationship, between identity and predestination will be enlarged upon elsewhere.

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something new – the life of the Father now manifested in flesh. The Son became the One who could say, ‘Behold I make all things new ... I am the beginning and the end’. This transaction of faith is the source of the faith of each man to form a new household of faith, for which he seeks a comparable helper, one brought to him by the Lord. There is a provision of grace from the Father, through Christ, for a new ‘*patria*’ (Gr. ‘fathered family’) to be established.

Just as headship is to be a dimension from Christ, so also the formation of a comparable helper from the intrinsic ‘rib’ of the man, is a work of Christ. We know this from the fact that Eve was not made by the man, nor was she presented from within Adam’s mandate. She was formed by the Lord and brought to the man.

Clearly, this establishes something which is new, for which a man leaves father and mother, indicating that this new reality is not a continuity of the tradition of the forefathers. In fact, where fallen attitudes prevail, tradition will reject and war *against* this new reality and endeavour to obligate children to the vanity of the forefathers. Peter says that we are to be redeemed from this kind of vain tradition. 1 Peter 1:18.

So it is amazing to consider the provision of grace given by the Father by which houses – new-fathered families – are established on Christ, within His body. Ministering the gospel of headship takes on new meaning, in that access to the Father, through Christ, is access to a provision for a man and woman to realise a single predestination. Neither can form the other, in this regard. A man cannot mould the woman into a comparable helper and, equally, the woman can’t make the man into a substantial head. They do not merely concede new roles to one another. Each must find a capacity from Christ, and then offer this to the other. If this does not happen, there is a danger that the two

will merely reorder the relationship (head, helper), or become *redefined* toward one another, *without* actually finding true comparability.<sup>5</sup>

Adam had a fruitful mandate before he received a helper. But the Scriptures record that although he 'gave names to all cattle, to the birds of the air, and to every beast' etc, 'for Adam there was not found a helper comparable to him'. Gen 2:20. The significance of this record cannot be overlooked. We could say it this way. Adam, and perhaps the angels assisting him, could not draw a helper from among the other creatures. The helper had to come out of his own body – from himself. Figuratively, Adam had done all that he could do to identify and mould a helper to himself, to his own image. It's not hard to relate this to our experience. Although a man may seek to find and shape a helper, finally he must desist from all such activity, and find the capacity to offer. As signified by Adam's sleep, he had to enter into a dimension of offering, paralleled in Christ on the cross, where his capacity will multiply and something new will come forth from himself.

There is an exact replica of this scenario in the life of Abraham, who was told that his heir would not simply be someone chosen from within his house, but one that would come forth from his own body. Gen 15:3,4. After receiving God's promise, Abraham was enveloped in an exercise of offering. Abraham, like Adam, looked everywhere for a helper, even conscripting a 'helper' in Hagar. However, Abraham and Sarah had to learn comparability, we could say.

5. Earlier in our courtship teaching, we spoke of '*reordering*' and '*redefinition* toward one another' in identifying this crucial phase of joining in Christ. Both these terms are applicable, as long as comparability is the foundation. If not, reordering to head and helper, and redefinition to one another, can be merely *exchanging* roles, and *conceding* ground, without offering in a fundamentally Christian mode.

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So, looking at the man's approach to this issue of offering, the man's role (cf. Adam) is to establish his mandate, cease his endeavours to form a helper, and enter the rest of faith and offering which is symbolised by Adam's sleep (cf. Abraham's vision, and Christ's three-day, three-night operation). The woman (in a process equivalent to Eve's unique creation) is not formed by the man, but is formed from, of and for the man, by Christ Himself. The practicality of each of these aspects, and the reproducing of this unique comparability in each couple (to the extent that every couple leaving father and mother is *just as unique in formation* as that first couple) is our aim.

Once the two have fundamentally chosen one another, their attention now turns to the faith of the operation of God. The two pursue a specific mode of offering, in the cross, where the Father, through Christ, can name a new family. In time, new names will be born – ones who are not merely created in the *psuche* dimension, but named within the collective *zoe* seed, from before the beginning.

### The man's offering

What is indicated by the 'sleep' of Adam? In following Adam's example, we would take it that a man must end his own search for a helper, and enter the rest of offering, submission, faith and love. He is to show a secure maintenance of the mandate of Christ, and of the ground of offering. He is not to find or mould his helper to be what he imagines he needs. If we extrapolate on Adam's experience, we could say that a man's first inclination is to cleave to someone 'other,' but compatible, with himself, not understanding that ultimately the woman must become as if she is taken from him, so as to be of him and for him. This is not what he will have expected, but is more than he expected. Amazingly, the exercise of her faith and offering will not show in an individual, newly created mandate of her own. Rather, in seeking a single predestination, she will be possessed of a faith and

relationship that is so entirely of him, that it will be possible to form a new family unit. 'For this cause', Adam proclaims, a man leaves father and mother. The fact that only the man is said to leave father and mother is intriguing, but is explained by the fact that he finds her to be so entirely of him, that he cleaves to her, because she has already found comparability to him. The discussion then, is not about who leaves, but about the inauguration of a new, legitimate 'father and mother' context – on the basis of her comparability as a helper.

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This is important, because this action of cleaving to the woman, once she is brought to the man by the Lord, draws attention to a most significant principle. For better or worse, he will seek to cleave to her, having left father and mother, and this union will define who and what the two become. Inevitably, this raises the question, 'What will occur if he cleaves to one who is not comparable, who is not one spirit with him?' If she feigns comparability, while beguiling the man to be comparable to *her*, what will be the effect of this falsehood? Will this seduction not establish a joining in another spirit, captive to the sway of Satan? Thinking in terms of the Fall, and the 'evil of our good', we can see what a severe captivity this will be!

This is exactly what Paul is proposing when he argues that the members of Christ can actually become members of a harlot. 1 Cor 6:13-20. (Paul has a number of different layers in mind here, including the principle of Babylon, and not only sexual immorality.) If we apply the statements more broadly, Paul is implying that there is a way in which a man can be one flesh (and one spirit) with his wife, that is also in fact harlotry, and not a genuine joining in the Spirit of the Lord. The man must not serve his wife's agenda, but remain joined in one spirit to the Lord. Then his wife will cease to be 'Eve', and will avoid the danger of exercising authority over the man, and thus over the church.

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Pointing to more extensive studies elsewhere, let us recall that the fundamental sin of Eve was her non-accountability in relation to Adam. Adam's fundamental sin was to allow this non-accountability in the field of his mandate. In terms of our subject, we could say that men (unlike Adam) must refuse to serve this non-accountability, and instead must maintain the ground of offering (rest, sleep) toward the mandate of Christ. If a courting man (and a married man, for that matter) will maintain the faith of offering, then Christ can form the woman, as *she* joins the fellowship of offering, to be a comparable helper.

### The foundation of the courtship

We realise, then, that this matter of proper joining must be negotiated once a commitment is made to proceed towards marriage. In fact, the fundamental dynamic of courtship becomes important. The implication of Adam's example is this. The man must not join himself to the woman to make her what he needs her to be. This kind of joining can *look* like headship and submission, but will lead to corruption. Rather, the man must *rest* in offering, and trust the Lord to bring her to *him*.

It's clear, then, that the bringing forth of something new – through faith in a single predestination – is the heart of 'finding comparability'. In practical terms, genuine bonding will be realised as both man and woman run to the limit of their capacity to bridge the gap between them, and now exercise faith to install the cross as the cornerstone that joins them.

Up until this phase, their pursuit will have been coloured by romantic idealism and altruism, and there is a high possibility that these dynamics will run on, particularly where couples feel that disparity and conflict can be avoided through religious romance. The dynamic until now will have been to express self, as equals, but only to an extent that is compatible with the other (altruism) and to the extent

that each continues to feel empowered by the appreciation of the other.

Elements of mutual empowerment, earlier in the romantic friendship, are not atypical, and are not destructive provided the two understand that this cannot be the basis for a godly marriage. Accordingly, finding comparability relies on a mutual decision to change the fundamental dynamics of the relationship. This can be difficult, and many couples admit, in hindsight, that they did not have a clear understanding of how to negotiate a genuine joining in one spirit. On the positive side, we quite well accept that if a minimum commitment to the Christian mystery of marriage can be negotiated, then the substance can be consolidated as they proceed in married life.

On the other hand, there are many marriages where the true comparability basis has to be recovered through repentance and reformation. In these situations, both must make their way back to functioning on the ground of Christ's offering, as they would need to have done in the first place. Of course, the gospel does declare grace and power for this kind of restoration.

### Negotiating comparability

On the courtship pathway, then, it is when both are committed to marriage, and committed to the foundation of Christian marriage, that they may be counselled toward finding the ground of offering where comparability is formed.

One sure sign that this phase is ready to occur is the evident exertion by the woman of a clear ownership of the relationship. It will be evident that she has 'stood up' and is not merely following the man's initiative – which to a large extent will have defined their progress up until now. In our writing on 'the exertion of feminine eros' we have shown that a point must come where the woman's commitment and security toward the future is evidenced by a sense of urgency for the man to 'state the ground' of the relationship. In romantic models of

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courtship, the end of the ‘will we, won’t we’ phase would be followed by immediate engagement. In the model proposed here, the couple would discuss a ‘private engagement’, with a view to being formed in the comparable pattern of the Scriptures.

The key to the process is to be able to shift the dynamics of the relationship onto the ground of offering as discussed above. Of course, there are several impediments to this shift, not least of which is the fact that the two, having decided to marry, are subject to a degree of inertia and momentum – inertia, in terms of existing dynamics, and momentum because of the desire to be married. With understanding, however, neither of these is difficult to manage.

The real difficulty is that the aspirational momentum and the joy of realising self-goals can look the same as the reward of finding grace through offering. So our first aim in giving counsel is to urge a commitment to Christian foundations, and also a forming of at least some substance to this commitment. We trust that the commitment will be more than ticking boxes, and we trust that sufficient substance can be apprehended to give the couple a genuine foundation for the future.

### Wedding preparation – marriage preparation

It is at this point that we have suggested that a division be made between wedding preparation and marriage preparation – the former being a six-month practical pathway which the couple may well commence when they feel confident to do so. On the ‘marriage’ side, counsel can be offered and the genuine substance of comparability must be negotiated well before engagement. In that case, it is important that the pace and intensity of wedding preparation doesn’t mitigate against sound development of the comparable relationship.

Finally, we repeat the point that until a private commitment to a future is expressed, the content highlighted above can only be an aspiration, and cannot be substantially negotiated.

## 2. The story of comparability

This extract examines the dynamics of comparability and the process of offering by which the headship of a new house is established.

We consider the scenario of a young man and a young woman who are leaving two different houses to form another house – we call this ‘finding comparability’. There is a house from which the young woman is coming: a family with a head – a father who is, hopefully, on the ground of the church. As well, we have a young man (and note, he must be a man, not a boy) whose family is hopefully also on the ground of the church, and who is beginning to leave his father and mother. He actually begins to leave his father and mother before he commences the courting process.

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Where did he leave and go to? He left his father's house to go and build his own house on the ground of Christ – in the community of Christ. He has left his father's house with a view to the young woman leaving her house and being joined to his house. Unless he has become a man and either has, or is learning, from Christ, this capacity to establish a house (he has headship from Christ), how will he establish a house? This process is not a synthesising of two houses; there must be a leaving. First he leaves his family home, and then she has to leave hers. Now this is happening on the ground of Christ.

### Redefinition through offering

As comparability is being sought, a couple becomes more aware of the mandate of the house being formed and the need for the order for life (headship) to be established if the house is to be on the ground of Christ. This can only be achieved through offering – the means by which there's a redefinition, and a transfer of relational reality from one dimension to another. The key principle here is that a father and mother of a marrying son or daughter never cease to be so, but the Lord intends that their role be redefined through offering. They will still be father and mother, but not in the mode that they were before. They will offer a relationship that is new, and it becomes new through the cross. It is in the cross that they lay down the relationships such as they existed before. Those marrying also make offering, for they are not simply 'breaking away' or cutting off relationship with their parents. The two are making an offering of themselves toward one another to raise up a new home. At the same time, they are offering a new relationship to their parents – viz. a relationship as parents-in-law, and as grandparents to the next generation.

Wherever the cross is properly interposed in relationships, something new is raised up. This is true with regard to finding comparability, as we have discussed, and it is equally true of all new relationships.

The principle by which transfer occurs through offering is clearly visible in Christ, for He transfers all our sin to Himself, and imputes all His righteousness to us. 2 Cor 5:21. This is a total statement of all that occurs in the offering of Christ, across the span of our lives. This is how our lives develop, grow and multiply.

Why do we say that there has to be an offering in this whole issue of courtship? It is because taking a wife in sanctification and honour is a whole offering action. It is a mechanism by which another house can be established, and result in fruitfulness. It is a process of offering involving the young man, the young woman, and her father and head in relation to Christ and the Father, by the Holy Spirit.

In actual fact, a young man does not progressively share in the headship of a young woman's father. Similarly, when we think of the meaning of '*paraclete*', a woman becomes a *paraclete* to the one man she marries. We need to take care that we do not confuse the headship of Christ over the corporate body, with the headship of a man over his household. Later we will make the distinction between Christ's headship (body) and the headship of a house (temple).

It's not that the young man comes and slowly shares headship with the father of the young woman. If that were the case, the father of the young woman would extrapolate his culture over the young man and ultimately impose his culture on the house of the young man. Neither does that young man bring headship from the culture of his father's house; he lays that down. He needs to have an interface, or inter-relationship, with Christ, his Head, from whom he has drawn headship.

What then will be transferred in this issue of headship? Practically, it involves a father with a daughter who is under his headship, and a young man in respect of his headship. It's necessary to observe two steps here. Then the transfer will be a practice of offering. The young man will not simply come to the house of the young woman to share

## 2. The story of comparability

her father's headship for the purpose of courting his daughter. There has to be an offering transfer, under the headship of Christ. Note also that the headship of Christ is from the Father, and doesn't belong to Christ Himself.

Just as Christ made offering to the Father to bring forth new life, so each man offers toward Christ, and his helper offers toward him, and in this way fruitfulness comes forth. Without this dimension of offering, within the order of headship, there is no fruitfulness.

### Comparability

How is a woman made comparable? We have divided the whole process into two blocks. One is the *courting* phase. The other we'll call the *comparability* process – requiring a private 'betrothal'. This will be a phase of genuine offering, of 'transfer', of interchange. Something has to take place between the young man who holds Christ's headship, the young woman's father who also holds Christ's headship, and the young woman who is to be made comparable by Christ. Just as the headship of the man is made adequate by and through Christ, so is the comparability of the woman. Both of these elements come from the Father through Christ.

These are kingdom realities, not body of Christ realities where, in Christ, there is 'neither male nor female'. Gal 3:28. The church weds these dimensions of kingdom and body. So if we use the word 'church', we are running together kingdom and body – the administration of the Father and the administration of the Son. Marriage is a kingdom reality of which Christ and the church are the example, as the apostle Paul writes in the book of Ephesians. But, remember, the house must be built on the rock. Every man must take heed to build on the 'Rock', which is Christ, the church. This applies equally to our personal life, or house, our marriage house, and our family house.

Note also that Christ is the Cornerstone, or the Rock, of the temple. And Christ, the chief Cornerstone, together with the apostles and prophets, form the foundation of the temple. Your house, your marriage, is a temple reality. The temple is a place of offering. We need to relate the headship and *paraclete* dimensions to Christ and to the Father. So there is a body element; and the kingdom, or temple, is in the body. The body is also the way, ladder, or pathway to the Father's house, or temple – the kingdom reality. Keep these two elements in mind and hold them together.

'It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him.' Gen 2:18. We've made the point that the woman's comparability is to fulfil the command to 'be fruitful and multiply'. That was the command to the man, and he couldn't do this on his own. Then we have the deep sleep of Adam. 'And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place. Then the rib which the LORD God had taken from man He made into a woman.' Gen 2:21,22. So this is 'making comparable'; there's a comparability happening.

Now God is doing that in the betrothing action, because the young woman is now becoming 'of' him. This is not actually happening in the courting action. A man is not 'pressing his headship' in the courting action or demanding that the woman be a *paraclete*. When we think of courtship, it's the question of viability that we're considering. This is, in effect, the question: 'What's in it for me and what's in it for us?' And this is basically selfish. There needs to be a shift over to, 'What's in it for the other and for God?' This is the betrothal element.

The Jewish betrothal has very special meaning for us because that is the point where the rib was taken – the young woman is suddenly becoming the bone and flesh of someone else. So that's the point where the viability issue has been worked through in the houses, has moved up a notch and is now coming to the ground of the church.

## 2. The story of comparability

At the point of betrothal, the offering transfer begins to happen. It is encompassed, in a sense, in the headship of Christ and in the father's headship in Christ, in an offering interchange that's realised only on the wedding day. It's only on the wedding day that the headship transference actually goes from the father to the young man. It's the comparability element that's happening before this.

The key to understanding this crossover is *offering*.

In the betrothal phase, a father is giving his daughter to Christ and to God (the Father). From the Father, through Christ, she is being given to this young man. But also, this father has been dignified by God the Father as the father of this woman and in the giving of his daughter to this man. And of course she is giving herself to this man. There is giving on all fronts; it's all an offering dimension. It is still a headship order from the fatherhood of God. That order is not severed, but is modified, by offering – that which is given to Christ through offering (that is the betrothal phase). That's why we say that ones test the viability first; so that they have faith. Why do a father and daughter and the young man test the viability first? So they can have faith to proceed to offering.

### The mandate of headship in the home

It is important that a man about to become the 'head' of a home understands the nature of the mandate of headship. It is not a chauvinistic order of control or chain of command. It is rather, the faith and capacity available to a man, that is sourced from the Father through the Son. Eph 1:15-23; 1 Cor 11:3.

Now we can begin to see what a wondrous mandate this is if we link it to Luke 10:17-20 – Christ gives authority. A man can participate in this authority dimension of headship when he, through the adoption, is joined to the life and capacity of Christ. Through the Spirit of Christ, headship then becomes this man's share in the adoption, the sonship

## FINDING COMPARABILITY

of Christ Himself. 2 Cor 5:17-21; Gal 4:3-7. The headship that a man receives from the Father through Christ on the wedding day when his house is established, is authority over demons. He is given authority to cast them out of his house because this is the headship of a man who is part of the adoption, in the sonship of Christ Himself.

We know that a man also receives the right and capacity to proclaim the kingdom as a priest to God. John 1:12. He is able to proclaim the kingdom word to the world from house to house, to see others born of God – faith for multiplication. Acts 1:7,8. We can see also that headship enables the ability to intercede for seed for multiplication. The faith for seed as displayed by Abraham, finds its origins in Christ. We see this clearly in the Gethsemane prayer. Mark 14:36. We also know that, from the beginning, Yahweh Son gave the mandate to ‘Be fruitful and multiply’. That is the faith for seed, declared in simplicity.

# 3. Bringing forth the helper

As a man and a woman seek to enter and form a marriage covenant, and become one flesh, they need to go through the process of being made *comparable*. By this action of Christ, the woman – now *of* the man – learns how to stand beside and opposite the man, and they are aligned together to be *one fruitful house*.

In the garden of Eden when God looked for a helper for Adam, there was not ‘a helper *found* comparable’. Gen 2:20. We read that ‘He who finds a wife *finds* a good thing’. Prov 18:22. The meaning of the Hebrew word for ‘found’ is ‘to come forth’.

## Standing beside and opposite

Further to this, one comparable (Heb. a helper suitable) means 'to help or stand beside and opposite'. As one comparable, the woman is able to stand opposite, and to be a reflection of the truth to the man – as in water, face reflects face. Prov 27:19.

So the process of courting is one where the woman learns to be both a help at the side of the man and a reflection of the truth, so that they may walk freely together as disciples of Christ. John 8:32. But where is this woman found, and how does she learn to stand beside and opposite?

## Coming forth

In the garden, there was no one coming forth to be 'one comparable' to Adam. God Himself had to form the one comparable from Adam's rib. Why a rib? Because it is essential to the structure, support and guarding of the man's inner organs – representative of his being. Woman was formed *from* his side, to be *at* his side. Gen 2:22. The rib was fashioned into woman, one comparable to man.

Before the rib was taken, God caused a 'deep sleep to fall on Adam'. Gen 2:21. We can compare this with when Christ hung on the cross and 'there was darkness over all the land'. Matt 27:45. When the side (the place of the rib) of Christ was pierced, blood and water flowed forth – a way was made for His church to be brought forth. John 19:34. This must be a time of offering for the man, as when Abraham offered to the Lord and over him came the 'horror and great darkness'. Gen 15:12. The Holy Spirit passed over his offering with fire and began to establish Abraham's household. There is nothing within the man's own capacity to establish the woman as one comparable to him. Now all that he can do is to offer, and through the time of great darkness, let Christ do His work.

### 3. *Bringing forth the helper*

#### Of Christ and of the man

The amazing thing is that the woman is now of the man – no longer the genesis of her father and mother. She stands on the *ground* of Christ, so that Christ Himself can bring her and give her to the man. Gen 2:22.

The woman has been '*fashioned*' with wisdom and strength as described in the psalms. 'Let our sons in their youth be as grown-up plants, and our daughters as corner pillars fashioned as for a large house.' Psa 144:12. She has been prepared to be a support in the man's house – a large house. She is not one of those to whom Paul refers as 'weak women weighted down with sins, led on by various impulses, always learning but never coming to the knowledge of the truth'. 2 Tim 3:6,7. This woman is teachable, knowing herself, having her feminine impulses under control. She is a woman giving the enemy 'no occasion for reproach'. 1 Tim 5:14.

#### Joined as one house

The man is the young plant, grown up (advanced, exceedingly excellent in body, mind, estate and honour) in his youth. And now, as a plant grown up, the woman can say, 'So is my beloved among the young men. In his shade I took great delight and sat down, and his fruit was sweet to my taste. He has brought me to his banqueting house.' Song 2:3,4.

She has been given to him, and now he has taken her to his banqueting house, for which she has been fashioned into a pillar. Now joined to her husband, the woman flourishes 'like a fruitful vine in the very heart' of his house. Psa 128:3. She has become the paraclete-helper to that man, enabling him to bring forth the firstfruits of his house. 'The fruit of the womb is his reward.' Psa 127:3.

# 4. Personal reflections from courting couples

The following reflections, statements and personal examples have been gathered to illustrate the kinds of discussions and responses that couples have made – both together and in fellowship with others – during this time of finding comparability as head and helper.

## Offering

- Multiplicity is only achievable through priesthood, and priesthood is always expressed in the capacity of offering
- The man has been looking for affirmation but needs to change to proper ambition for godly virtue – a man with a call – and offer to this woman
- The man has no role in forming the woman or making her comparable. Instead he names the nature of his offering

#### *4. Personal reflections from courting couples*

- The sleep of Adam, when Eve was formed from his rib, was the 'rest' of offering
- Don't think 'role', rather, think 'essential offering' to Christ
- At the point of offering (faith in action), the relationship multiplies
- Faith to make offering is the only way to proceed.

#### Head and comparable helper

- If they try to take a mechanistic approach, they will end up with headship as domination, and submission as a woman's submersion
- The only alternative to head and comparable helper is man ruling and woman encompassing
- The Holy Spirit gives power for comparability, thus enabling her to be a helper
- If she's comparable, she doesn't have to be told what to do
- A comparable helper will facilitate the predestination of the house
- As she cries out to God, He will make her comparable. The comparability (of the woman) is not to be achieved by the man
- The definition of a woman is her comparability
- They realise that if they attempt to take on head and helper in a 'role' perspective, their relationship will go down a parallel path, run by law, where enmity will be the result
- 'Re-ordering', or simply taking on the roles of head and helper, cannot make them comparable

## FINDING COMPARABILITY

- A man has to find a quotient/portion from Christ, which is headship. He then begins to establish a house as head and father on the same ground as the brethren
- Marriage itself does not give the man a helper. Finding a helper is more than finding someone to fulfil a role
- Comparability is the process of a woman becoming the rib of a particular man
- Being formed as comparable 'rib' means gaining illumination as to who the man is, in essential person
- A woman cannot be a helper when she is only complying
- The woman is not made comparable to her father
- Counsel cannot bring comparability about – it has to be by Christ.

### Leaving father and mother

- Bonding is the process of two becoming one. For the woman, it is going from being the seed of her father's house, 'back' to become bone and flesh of this particular man
- She has come from being her father's seed, and become an individual son (daughter) of God, an individual disciple of Christ, and now she is coming back to meet this man (as his rib) with a predestination (ie joined to his predestination)
- They need to make the cut from their own family and not allow family obligations from their parents to influence how their house is established
- From now on, can she hear from him? It is a progressive leaving father and mother
- She is not made comparable to her father, nor should he try to make her comparable to him.

## One house, one predestination

- A man and a woman in marriage equals one predestination – not two. There are not two predestinations in a house
- The indivisible bottom line is a house – a man and a woman
- A house is a synthesis of both male and female elements and Christ
- A house becomes an extension of the one predestination of Christ
- Courting couples often try to get to one *heart*, but must firstly come to one *predestination*
- Two predestinations cannot be synthesised to arrive at one heart
- One heart is possible because there's only one predestination for their house
- The predestination of God means the expression and fulfilment of His desire to bring forth many sons
- In establishing his house, a man can't allow family obligations to influence his decisions.

## Choosing

- Preferring is something you choose. Romance won't do this
- She is choosing this, and the Lord is *joining* them – giving them a remnant of His Spirit.
- Without a faith choice to submit, she is no use in terms of a helper – she is just complying
- She is making an inquiry in the cross as to who he essentially is – him, apart from father and mother. This is what she is to be defined towards

## FINDING COMPARABILITY

- Unless the woman has ‘stood up’, and chosen the way of submission, her mode will be one of compliance.

### Two phases – courtship viability and finding comparability

- Up until now, ie first stage, it’s been all about ‘me’
- What they are searching for is the cross – the only place where they can be joined
- Where issues may arise from now on, they cannot default to being simply agreeable with each other for the sake of peace
- They move from being brother/sister to head/helper
- As they walk together, their preferring of one another moves the relationship to its own uniqueness.
- They need to begin to acknowledge the reality of life’s situations and to seek the Lord in faith, rather than embracing the romantic view
- In the first stage, the couple should ‘fully run into one another’ and the relationship must then be renegotiated to the point of ‘being for the other’
- Joining begins when the woman properly stands up at the point of conflict, expressing feminine *eros* – fully accountable in her identity, and not afraid to jeopardise the relationship
- What is the substance of our commitment?
- In ‘finding comparability’, we are actually working on our marriage, not just on our courtship
- Each must move from seeing only self, ie self conscious, to being ‘other’ conscious

#### 4. Personal reflections from courting couples

- From the point of engagement, they proceed and grow via the means of offering towards making covenant and further offering on their wedding day.

#### Mandate

- The simplicity of headship is the statement ‘as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord’. Their mandate is to be a *paraclete* of Christ and a *paraclete* to His brethren. This is part of the predestination of a house, and therefore a man can say ‘we will’, in that he calls everyone in his house to this one predestination
- There is only one agenda – ‘as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord’. Only when that’s the agenda, can they meet
- The man is at rest having obeyed Christ, stating his mandate
- The man has no role in forming the woman or making her comparable. But he names his offering, ie his mandate. He then begins to establish a house as a head and father on the same ground as the brethren. He has faith for a house and looks to the Lord for provision of a helper comparable.

#### Faith

- The woman must come to faith and rest, apart from the oppression of reasoning everything out
- The man has faith for a house and looks to the Lord for the provision of a helper comparable
- She won’t find life and protection apart from faith (not even her husband becomes protection for her). Only as she offers in faith, is she protected
- Faith to make offering is the only way to proceed
- If there is no faith, there is no love; faith works by love

## FINDING COMPARABILITY

- Faith is demonstrated in each one's response (offering) to the lordship question
- Their faith commitment is walked through until the point of making covenant on their wedding day
- Each must accept the integrity of faith of the other, and accept their commitment to the relationship
- Typically, in the fallen dynamic of marriage, a man reverts to wrath and doubting (unbelief); a woman reverts to fear and terror (demand). A man withdraws attention; a woman withdraws trust. Therefore we see a man ruling and a woman encompassing (demanding)
- This means that in every point of their walk together, she will meet him, and measure her faith to his faith – she is then a helper comparable to him
- Upon every initiative of his faith and work (especially in relation to their 'house'), she is to be right there with him in his faith as he says, 'as for me and my house we will serve the Lord'
- Her faith is that she is being prepared to be this specific man's wife – for this reason her prayer and faith is to meet him at the cross at every point, both relationally and practically; believing that this will be the way in which they can continue in faith together, as one
- Their house cannot be driven by fear. Fear and the lies of the wicked one taint the 'one spirit', and war against the ability of the house to proceed in faith
- Because it is a house of faith, it operates by seasons, ie the cycle of offering.

## The cross

- Reconciliation is only possible through the cross. There is no other way for two to become one
- His lead (headship) is to ensure that they don't collapse into legal tender. Law would condemn him, and her; but the cross nails the law and puts to death the enmity
- The cross is the starting point; it is the birthplace for what is new
- Their faith is that, in every situation, they will be able to meet at the cross of Christ
- They can *only* 'meet' in the cross
- Comparability is a work in the cross, to which the woman's father must release her, and the cross should be between both
- This capacity to activate the cross is the only thing that will join a man and a woman, and make them comparable as head and helper
- The woman must go into the cross to find out what is essentially him, ie the rib (that *particular* man, not what is essentially male)
- Because of the Fall, she can only recover to this comparability by the cross.

## The Spirit making one

- If it is not the Spirit making one, then it is sinful and fallen – man ruling and woman encompassing
- Both need to be seeking illumination through the Spirit. The man's illumination is when he sees that this woman is the woman formed for him. And the woman's illumination is where she sees and understands who the man is

- They realise that if they take on head and helper in a purely 'role' perspective, their relationship will go down a parallel path run by law, and enmity will be the result
- His desire is for a help-meet. He desires that her commitment and vow towards the predestination given to him by Christ, is such that even if he fails to proceed, she will continue to be a *paraclete* in fulfilling the predestination of his house.

## Reality

- The lordship of Christ becomes a salvation question in that Christian life is not apart from the reality of right relational order in marriage
- This is not an artificial exercise anymore – they are entering a relational reality in Christ
- They need to drop the romantic view of life that says 'everything will be ok'
- They realise that they both need to begin to acknowledge the reality of life's situations, seeking the Lord in faith rather than embracing the romantic view. They realise that they both need to acknowledge when each one has hit their limit and stand in truth towards one another
- Relaxing down to who they are is simply learning to relate to each other at a basic real level without allowing the romantic view of life to hinder how they meet
- As they speak the truth of reality towards one another, she needs to simply stand up in faith, not slip downwards in herself, becoming overwhelmed and trying to figure it all out. She needs to listen to what the Holy Spirit is saying to her and continue to offer herself towards him and others

#### 4. Personal reflections from courting couples

- They are free to stand and state the truth – they do not need to run down into non-accountability
- As they walk together, their preferring of one another is the individual sign of moving the relationship on to its own uniqueness. Romance won't do this
- He will tell her if he thinks it isn't real; but won't tell her if it is real (otherwise her faith is in man, not God).

#### Vows

- The vow is not fulfilling romantic dreams. The vow and dialogue are fulfilling this one predestination of Christ
- Faith, for a woman, is to make a vow to bring forth this man's house and name it (this is motherhood)
- Her vow is the faith of that capacity to be a *paraclete*
- The dialogue between the man and the woman is in the nature of a vow – predestination in relation to the man, and vow in relation to the woman.

#### The ground of the brethren

- A man begins to establish a house as head and father on the same ground as the brethren
- For a woman, her submission is both to her husband as 'lord', and amidst the brethren. A woman who doesn't obey her husband won't obey the brethren; but if she does obey her husband, she will obey the brethren
- The woman will come to the man and submit to him as lord and, in so doing, will stand on the ground of the brethren
- He must call her to stand on the ground of his house and the ground of the brethren, *with* him, but *apart* from him

## FINDING COMPARABILITY

- On the ground of the brethren, she will receive from Christ, enabled by the Holy Spirit, a capacity to be his helper comparable
- The house (ie the man and the woman) expresses the multiplication of this house in the corporate
- A man must know where the Lord is calling him to work and relate amongst his brethren so that the woman can join him in it
- The individual 'son of God' predestination finds its definition in the 'brethren' and on the 'ground of the brethren'.