

A Suitable Partner

In the story of the creation of the first woman, the Hebrew word *ezer* is used to describe her relationship with the first man. Many Bibles translate that word as “helper” or “helpmate,” thus making the woman an addition to the man. The *Lectionary* translates the word as “suitable partner,” emphasizing mutuality rather than subservience. Since the word is generally used for divine assistance, it certainly does not imply inferiority.

Another important Hebrew word is *bad*, usually translated as “alone.” A common meaning is “separated from,” implying incompleteness in a relationship. This incompleteness is remedied when the man is given a suitable partner, one who is as intimate a companion to him as are his bones.

The intimacy of this relationship of mutuality is found in the Gospel passage as well. There the focus is

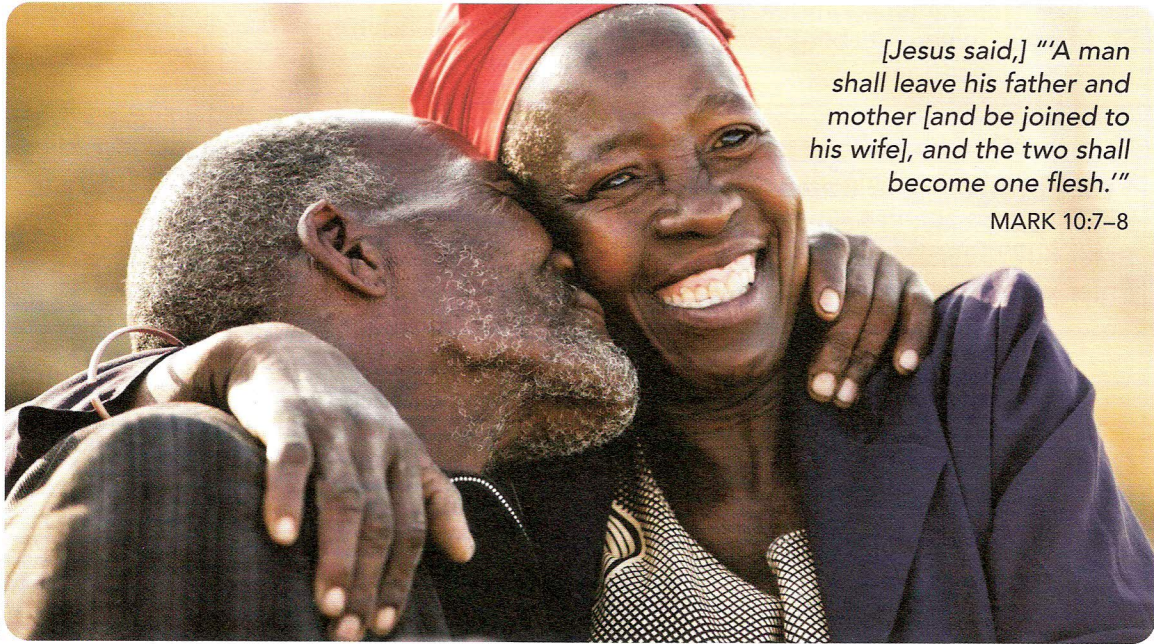
on the endurance of the relationship. Jesus insists that the bond that joins the couple together must not be severed. Many today might find this ruling too rigid. Things can happen in intimate relationships; partners can grow apart; staying together could become dangerous. While these are valid concerns today, women in the patriarchal society of the time would see Jesus’ interpretation of the law as protecting them. By law only men could divorce their wives, and reasons for doing so could be as trivial as poor cooking.

Today’s readings remind us of our need for intimate relationships of mutuality. They further underscore how important it is to cherish such relationships and to nurture them by respecting our partners.

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FOR Reflection

- ★ Do you consider yourself a “suitable partner”?
- ★ Are you nurturing and respectful?



[Jesus said,] “A man shall leave his father and mother [and be joined to his wife], and the two shall become one flesh.”

MARK 10:7-8

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