

Charity Studies In Premarital Counseling



“I am my **beloved's**, and my
beloved is mine.”
(Song of Solomon 6:3)

Notes Arranged by
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Marriages That Make It

Marriages, which make it, possess several important features.

1. They are marriages where each partner is committed to one another for life under God's design for marriage (Gen. 2:24; Matt. 19:6; Rom. 7:1-2; 1 Cor. 7:39; Malachi 2:16).
2. They are marriages where personal selfishness is abandoned and when sacrificial giving or living is bestowed on the other partner (Eph. 5:25, 28; 1 Corinthians 7:33-34). *A successful marriage demands a divorce, a divorce from your own self-love.*
3. They are marriages where each partner expresses Biblical love one toward the other, by demonstrating kindness in both their attitude and actions (I Cor. 13:4-8). Loving kindness transforms a marriage.
4. They are marriages where each partner is fulfilled physically (Song of Solomon 1:2, 4:5,16; 5:1; 6:3, 10-12; Proverbs 5:18-19; Hebrews 13:4).
5. They are marriages where God's ordained marriage roles are followed.
 - A. For the woman
Eph. 5:23-24; Col. 3:18; I Cor. 11:3; I Pet. 3:1,5; I Tim. 5:14; Tit. 2:4-5; Prov. 31
 - B. For the man
1 Timothy 5:8; I Cor. 11:3, Eph. 5:23; Eph. 5:25,28; I Pet. 3:7; I Tim. 5:8
6. They are marriages where the fruit of the spirit is expressed (Gal. 5:22-23) instead of the flesh (Gal. 5:19-21; Prov. 21:9, 19). The

fruit of the flesh, such as bitterness, pride, jealousy, rivalry, and adultery, wrecks marriages.

7. They are marriages where each partner is willing to forgive and forget (Eph.4:31-32).
8. They are marriages where each partner communicates with one another and keeps the lines of communication open (Eph. 4:15). Living joyfully with a marriage partner (Eccles. 9:9; Song of Solomon 2:15) can only be accomplished when the lines of communication remain open, so differences and aggravations can be settled.
9. They are marriages where the couples spend quality time together and do not allow the pressures of life to choke out their fellowship (1 Peter 3:7; Song of Solomon 1:4; 2:14; 3:1; 4:8; 5:2- 5; 7:11-13; 8:5; 1 Cor. 7:5). Do as many things together as possible.
10. They are marriages where each partner treasures the special friendship they share with one another (Song or Solomon 1:1; 5:16; 1 Pet. 3:7 – “heirs together of the grace of life”).

In a day when multitudes of marriages end in divorce, God has given Christians the governing principles and guidelines for marriage. When we apply godly living and obedience to our marriages, we can experience a happy and enduring marriage relationship.

“For best results, follow instructions of maker” - so advised a brochure accompanying a bottle of a common cold remedy. If such advice is good for the relief of a simple physical ailment, how much more it is needed for the relief of sick marriage relationships! God, the Author of marriage, has given us clear instructions in the Bible.

The four key words to remember in any marriage are:

- Love
- Communication
- Adjustment
- Forgiveness

Someone has likened adjustment in marriage to the two porcupines that lived in Alaska. When the deep and heavy snows came, they felt the cold, and began to draw close together. However, when they drew close, they began to stick one another with their quills. But when they drew apart, they felt the cold once again. To keep warm, they had to learn how to adjust to one another—very carefully!

Marriage is never a one-way street. It constantly takes adjustment and work. When God's guidelines are followed, a marriage can be a blessing, instead of a blight, a triumph instead of a tragedy.

Don't leave things fester and build up in your marriage relationship. Talk about them, deal with them biblically on a daily basis, and most of all, learn to forgive and forget.

1 Peter 3:9

"Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing."

Marriage can actually be an exciting, fulfilling, and a most rewarding experience in life. Don't miss out on God's best for your marriage!

Someone said:

"A successful marriage is not a gift; it is an achievement."

Three Biblical Concepts for a Successful Marriage

Genesis 2:24

"Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh."

1. **Leaving** – you can't live by mom's apron strings any longer! There must be severance of a prior family relationship and the establishment of a new relationship. Mom and dad no longer make the decisions in the new family unit.
2. **Cleaving** – The word "cleave" resembles joining threads together to create one new piece of cloth. The word suggests the ideas of *passion* and *permanence* in the marriage relationship. The

marriage bond is to be an *intimate* and *irrevocable* union. In marriage the two become interwoven together in God's eyes. When married, a man's priorities change. Before they were primarily to his parents, but now they are primarily to his wife. The two form a new relationship whereby they are spiritually "joined" or cemented to one other in a new family relationship, which is unattached to the previous one. The idea of "cleave" means to cling together or be glued together in a new relationship and speaks of an ongoing loving bond, a love that is to be unbreakable and lasting.

"Charity never faileth" (1 Cor. 13:8). True love continues to blossom in spite of trial and difficulty. When it is Holy Spirit inspired love, it is unbreakable. Since love is designed to be unbreakable, we must remember that God hates divorce. Divorce destroys what God has ordained to be unbreakable. God intends for the marriage unit to remain glued or cemented together in an unbreakable love and undying devotion to one another.

Malachi 2:16, "For the LORD, the God of Israel, saith that he hateth putting away" (divorce). Divorce among Christians must stop! It is a travesty or mockery of the undying love that Christ has for the Church. The old idea that marriage vows were sacred and binding has been thrown out of our modern-day courts. But God still says that love and marriage is for life.

Divorce should never cross our mind and be considered an option since God hates it. The attitude of many today is how I can get *out* of marriage. However, our attitude must be how we can get *through* this! Our undying commitment to one another is greater than any problem. We can wrestle with the problem, get it solved, settled, get to the other side, and go on with life.

3. **Sharing** – The "one flesh" (Gen. 2:24) expression means that both the man and woman in the marriage are woven or joined together in God's eyes and become a complete physical and spiritual unity where two lives become one that are now shared together in intimacy, love, care, and spiritual living.

The “one flesh” union is the result of the joining, cleaving, or gluing process (when God joins two people together in a marriage union). The “one flesh” relationship speaks of being woven or intertwined together where both the man and wife SHARE and enjoy their lives together – intimately, physically, spiritually, emotionally, harmoniously, and victoriously.

This expression means that both of you become ONE physical and spiritual unity in the eyes of God and your own marriage, which allows you to share and experience your daily lives together in a very close, intimate, loving, affectionate, and special bond.

Just as the church shares a new unity, a togetherness and close bond and relationship with Christ’s life (Gal. 2:20), so both the man and wife share a daily love, intimacy, and spiritual bond which is something that is very beautiful and designed by God. This is why some people have a unity candle at their wedding. It reminds them of God’s plan – “the two shall be one flesh.”

Someone said:

“In marriage two are made one, the question is, which one?”

Actually it’s not a question of whether it’s the woman or man. In marriage, two separate people are brought together in God’s eyes and are made into one new family unit which forms a new spiritual intimacy between two people who were once separate.

The “one flesh” union is the result of the cleaving or gluing process (when God joins two people together in a marriage union). This “one flesh” tie or bond means that both the man and woman become a physical and spiritual unity in the eyes of God which they now share and experience in their daily relationship and living. Sharing together is an important part of the marriage relationship.

1 Peter 3:7

Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered.

As one person or unit you will experience a newfound sharing of intimacy, love, and care for one another that is very special and something that can be highly treasured. This “one flesh” union (togetherness) might be understood as the special soul tie (soul mates) that the two experience and share through physical intimacy and living and also a spiritual bond that is experienced or shared in the marriage relationship. The “one flesh” union means in a practical way that the couple becomes one in God’s eyes and begins to share a new physical and spiritually life together which is experienced in daily intimacy, living, and caring. It truly is a wonderful life.

Ephesians 5:31-32

“For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.”

Just as the church shares a new union or togetherness and close bond and relationship with Christ’s life (Gal. 2:20), so both the man and wife share a new unity together that is experienced in daily love, intimacy, and spiritual living, which is something beautiful and designed by God. This is why we have the unity candle service. It reminds us of God’s plan – “the two shall be one flesh.”

Ten Communication Principles for a Marriage

Communication is one of the keys to any successful marriage. Below are some important principles to consider so you can keep the lines of communication open. A man asked his neighbor to “take care” of his cat while he was away on vacation. The neighbor agreed. When the man returned home, his cat was nowhere to be found. He ran next door to his neighbor and said, “Where’s my cat.” He received a puzzled look from the neighbor and a response, “I shot him. I thought you said, ‘Take care of him.’” Apparently the lines of communication broke down somewhere along the way. Lack of communication within the marriage causes many problems. The Bible gives some important principles on how to communicate which will enable two different people to live together in harmony.

1. The principle of understanding.

We must understand how our spouse thinks and feels. The Bible commands a husband, in particular, to dwell with his wife “according to knowledge” (1 Pet. 3:7). We must have a sensitive understanding regarding our wife’s needs and the way she physically functions as a woman. In the marriage we should quit trying to be *understood* all the time and start *understanding*. We must understand what each partner is facing and where they are at in a particular phase of their lives. An understanding love is important in any marriage. It keeps the lines of communication open. We understand the heartaches, physical difficulties, and emotional needs of each partner and seek to meet these needs, instead of distancing ourselves from one another. A lack of understanding breaks down communication and fellowship in the marriage.

2. The principle of timing.

We need to time our conversations according to our spouse’s mood. The Bible says, “I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now” (John 16:12). Sometimes we can have the right message at the wrong moment. Sometimes things are better discussed after supper than before supper. The husband should remember that it’s better to discuss certain things with his wife after a good day rather than a frustrating or bad day. If the wife needs some extra money for household expenses, she might ask her husband after he gets paid and not when he is broke. Making requests at the right time is another way to communicate effectively.

3. The principle of solving conflicts.

The Bible says we should always fail to resolve tension and issues among one another, through forgiveness, so the lines of communication can remain open (Matt. 5:23-24; Eph. 4:32). We may say, “It’s not my fault!” or “I didn’t start it!” But this makes no difference. In Matthew 18:15 Jesus commands the individual, who has been wronged, to actually go to his brother and seek resolution and restored fellowship. God is more interested in resolving problems in the marriage than laying blame. We must always focus on resolving conflicts even when they are not our fault. After all, our mate’s conflict really becomes ours as well, since we live together under the same roof. So it’s a problem we need to resolve together.

4. The principle of silence.

Proverbs 29:11 says, "A fool uttereth all his mind: but a wise man keepeth it in till afterwards." This is a very wonderful statement from Scripture. A wise person thinks before he speaks; however, many people speak before they think. Pop psychology says we should say everything that we think. However, this often becomes a license to express the flesh. Not everything we think is godly (Jer. 17:9) or Scriptural and we should be slow to speak (James 1:19). You never must apologize for words you do not say. Silence in some situations is admirable (Prov. 17:28). We must think before we speak, and if what we are about to say is from the flesh, then don't speak it. Silence is sometimes the best answer to solving communication conflicts in the marriage. Of course, this does not mean we should fail to communicate and share our interests, desires, and feelings with each other, as we seek to please one another in the marriage relationship (1 Cor. 7:33-34). What we are talking about is blurting out inappropriate fleshly words, demeaning comments, and angry statements about our partner. Only a fool speaks all of his mind all of the time!

5. The principle of edification.

Our words and general speech should seek to build up our partner and not tear them down. Romans 14:19 declares, "Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another." Edifying or building up one another through speech is very important in the matter of communication (1 Thess. 5:11; Rom. 15:2). If I am constantly battering my partner, I am not building up my partner. I must make the point to speak positive things to my partner and when the time comes for the negative, this too can become a springboard for edification (2 Cor. 10:8). Certainly the positive must outweigh the negative. Ephesians 4:29, "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers."

6. The principle of listening.

We must listen when we speak to one another in the marriage. This is a key part of the communication process. The Bible says in Matthew

11:15, “He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.” We are told to be “swift to hear” (James 1:19) which means to be quick to listen to others. In most marital difficulties, which have resulted in much tension and frustration, people do not really listen to each other. We would rather turn up the volume to get our point across since we do not think our spouse has been listening to us.

We must learn to listen intently without reading the newspaper or occupying ourselves with something else while communicating. We must listen responsively by saying, “That’s interesting” or “I understand.” We can’t be like a bump on a log. Use some occasional interjections and smile. We must listen agreeably by finding something to agree on, even when we disagree about some things. We might say, “Well, I certainly agree with that” or “I totally see your point on this.” We will never get our point across very well, when we are disrespectful, and blast out at each other.

7. The principle of kindness.

Our words must always express kindness to our partner (Eph. 4:29-32; Prov. 31:26). When we allow the flesh to interfere our communication begins to break down. God wants us to be compassionate, kind, and courteous in both our actions and speech (1 Pet. 3:8). Someone said, “If you are unkind, you’re the wrong kind.”

I might have people disagree with my *position*, but they should not disagree with my *disposition*. Kind words, a considerate attitude, and a helpful spirit go a long way toward resolving differences. Proverbs 15:1 says, “A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger.” The word “soft” applies to both the kinds of words that we speak and also the manner in which we speak them. We should speak with a soft tone when having discussions and differences. The Bible is very clear on the use of our speech. We can use our words to stir up wrath or we can use our words to turn it away (Prov. 8:6-8).

8. The principle of carefully chosen words.

Our words do matter in a marriage relationship. Proverbs 25:11 says, “A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver.” What a beautiful visual picture – golden apples on a silver platter. When we

use right words, kind words, constructive words, and edifying words, it's then that we can communicate effectively in our marriage. Many times it's how we say something that makes the difference, even when something must be said that is negative. A word fitly spoken is communicating a message in a right way. It involves tactfulness and kindness. They are carefully selected words.

A point can be made without degrading, destroying, and dividing the marriage relationship. One pastor was singing out of tune in his solo with the choir and the music director said, "Pastor, you are phonating beneath the pitch." This was a kind way to say, "You're off-key!" In the marriage relationship, instead of saying, "That was a stupid thing you did or said," you might try saying, "Maybe you could have expressed yourself in this way or done it differently." Words correctly spoken are like apples of gold on a silver platter.

9. The principle of praise.

Every partner should make a point to thank and praise each other in the marriage relationship (1 Pet. 3:8-9 – "rendering ... blessing" which means to speak well or praise our marriage partner). Each marriage partner should praise one another for the things they do around the house for each other and their accomplishments in life. We should give each other praise, as we serve one another, and as we accomplish wonderful things for the Lord. This is not praise designed to inflate the ego of a marriage partner, but to express appreciation and gratitude for them, as a wife, husband, and servant of the Lord. For instance, a wife should thank her husband for supporting her and a man should thank his wife for meeting his needs in the home. Praise should also be given to each partner for their beauty, as each partner reflects masculinity and femininity (Song of Solomon chapters 4-5). Praise is an integral part of communication within the marriage. Proverbs 31:28 says, "Her children arise up, and call her blessed; her husband, *also*, and he praiseth her"). More praise and less pounding will do wonders for a marriage relationship and keep the lines of communication open.

10. The principle of self-control.

James 1:19 once again reads, “Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath.” This involves self-control which comes from the filling of the Holy Spirit (Eph. 5:18; Gal. 5:22-23). Many times we say, “I just couldn’t help myself,” or “He made me so mad,” or “She just knew which buttons to push.” These are all excuses. We are called upon to keep our body in subjection, which is the vehicle through which our old nature and emotional responses exhibit themselves (1 Cor. 9:27). This means we can choose to not express wrath to others. Good communication in any marriage is a choice on our part (2 Cor. 7:1) and a virtue that we can exercise through the power of the Spirit. There is a non-psychological and spiritual answer to godly communication and marital fellowship – it’s the work of the Holy Spirit taking place in our hearts and lives.

The Dirty Dozen in Communication

1. Inflammatory words

These are gunpowder words that create tension. They are unkind words that tear down and promote division. “Where did you get the ugly hairdo?” God has called us to speak kind words (Col. 4:6) and express kindness toward others (Eph. 4:31-32).

2. Withheld words

These are words that we should say but don’t say it, such as, “I love you.” One man said, “I told her that I loved her when I married her and I’m a man of my word!” Do yourself a favor and say the words that need to be said.

3. Discouraging words

These are words that bring discouragement and destruction to another person, such as “You never do anything right.” “You may not be pretty honey but beauty is not everything.” “Anybody could have done what you did.”

4. Gossiping words

These are demeaning words which are spoken behind someone's back. They are words that destroy and defame a person. We are called upon to speak well of others (Prov. 31:23).

5. Cowardly words

These are words spoken by cowards. They are indirect words which are designed to sleight another person. When we make comments about others, which have an underlying tone and meaning, we become a coward, not willing to face the person with truth and dealing honestly with them (Phil. 4:8).

6. Laughing words

These are words which are spoken in jest. However, when humor is made to criticize or hurt someone; it's not humor. It becomes a cruel way to lash out against them.

7. Questioning words

These words are not met to ask questions which are objective; they are judgmental questions. "How stupid can you be?" and "Are you ever concerned with my needs?" or "Do you ever go where I want to go?"

8. Pronoun words

These are words which major on a personal pronoun that is singular ("my house," "my children," "my car"). Instead of using this personal pronoun we should say, "Our house, our children, and our car." Never let the "we" go out of your marriage. If you say, "I go my way and she goes her way" you are losing your togetherness and unity.

9. Contradictory words

These are words that always contradict what another person says. Some people are born in the negative case! Whatever you say, they take the opposite direction. Don't always be negative and contrary!

10. Repetitious words

These are words which hound another person about their shortcomings or faults. Never say never. “You never have my breakfast on time.” “You are never on time for dinner.” “You never get anything done around the house.” You can solve a problem or differences without bringing forth these types of negative and repetitious words.

11. Profane words

Christians can use profane words in front of their wives and children. Our language is to be purified of God (Eph. 4:29; 5:4). We must get our value system from God’s Word – not television, culture, and Hollywood. God wants us to be Christlike in our language.

12. Egotistical words

These are words that rub it in. “I told you so” and “I was right all along.” These types of words intend to prove that someone was right. They stem from the prideful ego of the old sin nature (1 John 2:15-16) and are not conducive to a strong relationship.

How to Communicate in a Marriage (Ephesians 4:25-32)

1. Be honest (vs. 25).

“Speak every man truth with his neighbour” (and wife!). There is no place within a marriage for lies and deceit. We must be truthful and honest in all our dealings and relationships. When we hide things from each other we lose trust and confidence in one another. Then too, we must be open to share our feelings with one another. Truth and honesty must be the focal point of the marriage.

2. Resolve your conflicts (vv. 26-27)

“Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: Neither give place to the devil.” Don’t let your problem on Tuesday night become your problem on Wednesday morning. Don’t let the sun go down upon your wrath. If you don’t resolve your problems, then

the devil is gaining ground. You are giving place to the devil and he is getting a foothold in your marriage.

3. Demonstrate acts of giving (vs. 28).

“Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with [his] hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.” When our marriage partner has needs we should seek to meet those needs in a sacrificial and loving way (“give to him that needeth”). This keeps the lines of communication open. As we are caring for one another we find ourselves communicating with one another.

4. Speak healthy words (vs. 29)

“Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.”

Healthy or wholesome words are words that encourage and lift one another up. We are to minister words of grace and kindness to our marriage partner and build them up, instead of tear them down.

5. Don't react negatively (vv. 30-32)

“And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour (*yelling*), and evil speaking (*slandering and unkind words*), be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.”

Our response to our marriage partner is very important. If we return evil for evil, we will create greater conflict (1 Pet. 3:9). Negative reactions that stem from the old nature will create division and tension in the marriage relationship. Our positive reactions to our mate are the expressions of kindness and forgiveness which originate from the fruit of the Spirit and the new nature.

Various Questions On Marriage

I. What does it mean to be the man's "help meet" in Genesis 2:18?

Genesis 2:18

"And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him."

The words "help" (aid) and "meet" (counterpart or parallel to the man) means that the woman was created by God to be a helper that corresponds to the man (unlike the animal creation). She can interact with the man mentally, physically, and spiritually. Adam's creation was not complete because he lacked a partner or mate that corresponded to his creative likeness. In other words, the woman was created to be like Adam physically, spiritually, and mentally – someone who was like Adam and unlike the animals. Adam could not marry a giraffe since it would be hard for him to kiss a giraffe! He would need to get a ladder!

Seriously, the woman's design creatively corresponded to who Adam was in his human design or creation. She was his *creative counterpart*. No animal could be a fitting counterpart to Adam. It had to be another person who was human and similar to Adam. When Adam discovered that God had provided him with a partner like himself, not like one of the other animals, he rejoiced greatly (Gen. 2:23). We should probably read between the lines of Genesis 3:22-23. Adam probably said, "Wow!" when Eve was created and brought to him to be his helper.

The woman was created specifically for the man to meet his needs physically and be a loving companion to him in every way. The woman was created to be a compliment, counterpart, and companion to the man assisting him in life. Ladies, your man needs you! The woman was uniquely designed by God to assist the man in fulfilling his calling as head and leader of the family unit. Therefore, the woman should stand behind the man and seek to help him, as he seeks to guide and lead the family unit.

Note: The term "help" does not mean a slave. It means one who supports the man in doing his task of following the will of God. The

woman perfectly complements the man in helping him fulfill God's will and purpose in the marriage relationship which is to lead it and guide the family.

The wife is then created to be a helpful counterpart and companion as Genesis 2:18 says. Her help is an essential element of her companionship. The very nature of her submission (Col. 3:18; Eph. 5:23) requires that she contributes, and gives what she can, to offer assistance to the man. A wife is to be a helpful aid and assistance to the man. She is to stand by her man in every way.

Apparently, with the husband's permission, the wife can also be involved in decision making as it applies to various areas of married life. Without this capability the wife will not be a very good helper to her husband. Being a helper does not merely involve doing the dishes and washing and ironing the clothing. It can also apply to the basic decisions that must be made within the marriage regarding the children's needs, the home needs, and other daily routines and activities. Men, we must give our wives some breathing space.

We must remember that marriage is a partnership as well as a headship and body relationship (1 Cor. 11:11-12). Both of the marriage partners must remember that they are partners together in the relationship ("heirs together of the grace of life" - 1 Pet. 3:7). We belong to each other and need one other and we must remember this when it comes to making various decisions and meeting one another's needs in life. Our togetherness and partnership will keep the slave mentality from becoming part of the marriage relationship.

However, the wife may not go above the husband's ruling decisions but can offer much help. Likewise, she must respect the husband's final decisions even when she may not always agree. Any wife who insists on being a decision-maker above her husband is placing herself in a position of disobedience. This will be a shame to her and a threat to the success of the marriage.

II. What does submission mean?

Ephesians 5:22

“Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.”

Colossians 3:18

“Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord.”

Ladies, the word submission really means to be brought under one’s authority. It portrays the thought of subordination or being subject to someone. This word was used as a Greek military term meaning, "to arrange troop divisions in a military fashion under the command of a leader." In non-military use, it was "a voluntary attitude of giving in, cooperating, assuming responsibility." *The marriage relationship is not a military relationship, but a functional relationship based upon love.* For the wife, she is to be willing to relinquish her rights and be brought under her husband’s rule or authority and learn to live in loving and willing subjection to him as the leader within the home.

Submission really consists of two things:

- Obedience toward the husband’s leadership.
- Respect for the husband’s headship position.

As a wife, you need to obey your husband’s leading, guidance, and decisions in life (1 Peter 3:1, 5-6; Ephesians 5:22-24; Col. 3:18). In doing this, you will demonstrate respect for your husband’s role of authority over you which God has given him. As a wife, you must learn to demonstrate respect or reverence for your husband due to his headship position over your life. In short, you should submit to your husband and show respect toward him since he is your head or leader.

Ephesians 5:33

“Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence *her* husband.”

You can express admiration and reverence for your husband by doing just a few things.

- Seek his advice and opinions about a decision.
- Never slander him before others.
- Look for opportunities to draw attention to your husband's positive qualities when you are with other people. Brag on him.
- Expressing gratitude to him for his care and provision for your life. Don't take these things for granted. They are important to him.
- Be *attentive* when he talks to you and be *affectionate*.
- Maintain a romantic and strong, active, physical relationship with him.

Obedience and reverence are the primary components related to submission. The Bible is very clear on this matter. **As a wife, God expects you to be submissive to your husband in every area (physically, spiritually, and financially).** Ephesians 5:24 brings this truth out into the light. “Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so *let the wives be* to their own husbands in every thing.” Of course, this Biblical teaching flies directly in the face of modern-day feminist philosophy. We must wholeheartedly disagree with *feminism* but totally agree with practicing *femininity*. A woman’s desire toward her husband should be this: **“And Ruth said, Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God”** (Ruth 1:16).

Let’s answer some questions at this point.

- A. Must a wife submit when her husband asks her to do something wrong?

Suppose a husband interferes with his wife in relation to her living out her Christian life? What should she do then? If the husband requires her to disobey a plain command of Scripture, then she must disobey her husband and be true to the Lord. When submitting to a husband, a wife will always follow his decisions and direction when they do not compromise her faith and loyalty to God. Remember the Peter principle: “I should obey God rather than man” (Acts 5:29)

Of course, if you need to disobey your husband, you can do it in a submissive spirit, letting him know that you love him and want to please him, but it is more important that you obey God.

B. Must a wife submit to an abusive husband?

Peter's words, "if any obey not the word" (1 Pet. 3:1b) show that he wasn't just thinking about nice husbands. Not every husband is godly but at the same time not every husband who is not kind and loving as he should be is an abusive husband. In any event. We can conclude that a wife may need to submit to some lighter forms of abuse and maintain her testimony before her husband as Peter suggests in 1 Peter 3:2. Ladies, be careful about judging your husband as a narcissist or control freak. You can also be controlling!

Be careful when you define abuse. Many women misunderstand and even exaggerate their claims of abuse. The difficult question is how much legitimate abuse must a woman take? It seems that a wife must submit to some verbal and emotional abuse. Tough love! However, if the husband begins to harm her physically, she needs to call civil or church authorities. There are civil laws against battery, and it is proper for an abused wife to call in authorities to confront and deal with a husband who violates the law.

C. Can a wife be submissive and yet confront her husband's sin?

In other words, is there a proper place for "tough love"? I think the answer is "Yes!" Love seeks the highest good of the one loved, and sometimes that means confronting sin. "Love rejoiceth not in iniquity but rejoiceth in the truth" (1 Cor. 13:6). At the same time, love covers a multitude of sins (1 Pet. 4:8), so love doesn't mean jumping on your husband's every sin as if you were the Holy Spirit. If you must confront, you should do it in an appealing way, so that your husband can see that you really care for him (Gal. 6:1-2). You may say, "Honey, I love you and I value our relationship. But when you drink alcohol, it hurts both you and your relationship with me and God. You need to get help. I'm not going to cover for your behavior the next time you're drunk." "Honey, I will always love you, but when you talk to the children in the way you do, it's not honoring to God and frustrates them."

Out or reverence for the man's leadership role, 1 Peter 3:5-6 reveals that godly women of old possessed the testimony of submission. They submitted in a silent, humble, and gentle way. The idea of silent and humble submission is the basis of their real beauty. It was an inward beauty of heart that produced this outward beauty of submission (1 Peter 3:4). Any wife "adorns" or beautifies herself (1 Pet. 3:3), as a woman and wife, when she learns the place of humble and gentle submission. This is part of Biblical womanhood.

God's Word teaches submission based upon the order of creation and the fall (1 Tim. 2:13-14). Although both man and wife are equal in nature (spiritually), the fact that the man names the woman (Gen. 3:20) indicates that she is expected to be subordinate to him, which is an important understanding in the Biblical narrative ("thy wife" – Gen. 3:17). Ladies, God expects you to be submissive to your husband's leadership and decisions as he seeks to guide the family and be "head" (1 Cor. 11:3) or leader in the marriage relationship.

There is a little outline that helps wives to understand about this role of submission.

1. The manner of submission.

Ephesians 5:22

"Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord."

The wife is to remember that when she submits to her husband that she is really submitting to the Lord's will and purpose – "as to the Lord." This should add a whole new twist to the wife's submission. When the wife submits, she must remember that she is really submitting to God's plan and will for her life. In reality she is submitting to the Lord, as she yields to His plan and purpose for her life. This is the only proper or fitting thing that the wife can do, since it is God's design for her (Col. 3:18).

2. The motive of submission.

Ephesians 5:23-24

“For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so *let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing.*”

The motive behind the wife’s submission should be to honor her head, which is her husband. The wife should seek to show respect to her husband as the leader or head of the marriage unit, even as we are to show respect or honor to Christ who is the head of the body or New Testament Church.

Remember the analogy of the human body to understand this. *The head of the body gives the orders and takes the lead. The body must respond to the head.* If the body does not respond to the head both the body and head are dishonored. When the body responds to the head there is harmony and coordination. So the motive behind your submission, as a wife, should be to promote honor and respect for your husband, since he is the head of the marriage. Your submission actually brings honor to both the body and the head of the marriage unit, since it allows both to harmoniously function together, as they should.

Another motive for submission would be the holy angels.

1 Corinthians 11:10

“For this cause ought the woman to have power (*the sign of authority*) on *her* head because of the angels.”

Universally, women have a natural veil of hair to indicate and portray her submission to her husband (1 Cor. 11:15). Do you realize that the angels who are a perfect example of submission to God are watching you, as a wife, perform your role of submission. They are seeing if you are submitting to God’s order of authority like they are doing. What kind of report do you have among the angels?

3. *The model of submission.*

Ephesians 5:22-24

Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so *let* the wives *be* to their own husbands in every thing.

Ephesians 5:33

“Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence *her* husband.”

Ladies, what is the pattern or model that you are to follow when learning about submission? The Bible says you are to follow the example of submission which the Church has toward Christ. Christ is the head of the Church and therefore each member within the body of Christ must be submissive to Christ. Each member must follow His decisions and direction for their lives. We are under His authority throughout life. In a similar way the wife is to follow the husband's authority and leadership in the marriage relationship. She is to submit to his decisions and leading within the family unit and place herself under his authority, even as the Church does to Christ. This is the model of submission that is given to the wife (Example: “I'll ask my husband”).

Also, remember that Christ is the deliverer, protector, and savior of the body of Christ (Eph. 5:23), which is the Church. In like manner, the wife is to come under the protection, provision, and preservation of the husband within the marriage. She is to submit to his care and protection and authority over her life, even as the Church does with Christ. The husband is to be a “superman” toward his wife.

4. The means of submission.

Ephesians 5:18

“And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit.”

God has provided a way for the wife to submit to her husband. He has provided a divine means whereby she can lovingly have victory over the old nature of rebellion which seeks or desires to have control

and dominance over the man (“and thy desire *shall* be to thy husband” - Gen. 3:16). The battle of the sexes began in Genesis 3:16. This spirit of rebellion against the man was part of the Genesis curse. Women would seek to dominate men because of their old nature. They would continue to follow the same path which Eve did when she became a leader of Adam by offering the fruit to him. So the original women’s liberation movement began in Genesis 3:16. The only way a woman and wife can overcome this old nature and her domineering feminism that stems from her sin nature is to be filled with the Spirit. Under the Spirit’s control she can lovingly submit and not give in to her old nature and the Genesis curse.

When a woman is NOT relying on the Spirit’s power (Eph. 5:18) in order to be submissive, she will seek to get her way and the man’s attention through various means:

- Sweetness (A cover-up for her real agenda)
- Sickness (“I’ve got a headache and can’t go to church today”)
- Salary (“I make more money than you!”)
- Sex (“Not unless I get my way!”)
- Sobbing
- Screaming
- Silence
- Stubbornness

The teaching of submission does not demean women or make them less spiritual or incapable of making spiritual decisions. The teaching is given for *functional authority* within the home. So, when the final decision needs to be made, who makes the decision? It would be the man who is the leader.

God despises when a woman takes on the role of leading the family and trying to get her way no matter what. Some women try and cover up their rebellion to male leadership, masking themselves as humble followers, but they are actually attempting to lead from behind by possessing wrong attitudes, actions, anger, and attempts to push against the husband. To borrow a Biblical expression, they are constantly kicking against the pricks (Acts 9:5; 26:15). Eventually the man caves and gives in to his wife. When this happens, the marriage is out of order and the true blessing of God cannot be achieved.

III. Does the submission of the wife mean that she is a slave?

No, her submission does not classify her as a slave. *The husband is not the king and the wife a servant.* The command for submission is different than is given for children to obey (Col. 3:18, 20). The submission relationship of the wife to the husband is not a child relationship. It is true that wives must be obedient to their husbands (1 Peter 3:6), but this obedience is not the same as a child's obedience (Eph. 6:1). This is because obedience is the natural response of submission and Paul wants to avoid the term "obey" in this setting, since husbands are not to treat their wives, as they would their children. Men are not to treat their wives as slaves, going around barking commands at them. The wife is to be an *equal* to him as an adult and partner within the marriage relationship. She is to be respected, as an adult, and not treated as a subservient child or slave. Men, don't treat your wife as a child. She will react negatively to this type of treatment.

We can see that the woman of Proverbs 31 was an exciting, well-rounded person, who was "with it" intellectually and in every other way. She did not remain in chains within the home and sit there all day. A wife's submission is not some kind of slave-like blind obedience. She can offer input and help freely and respectfully. The central character of the woman in Proverbs 31 is that she helped her husband in all points of life. You see, help that is given respectfully, never conflicts with submission.

Nevertheless, the wife should always be submissive to her husband "in every thing" (Eph. 5:24). This provides functional authority to the marriage, keeps our marriage Biblical, and brings the greatest blessing into the marriage. Remember: "When two people are on a horse, one has got to be behind."

IV. How can a husband make it easier for his wife to submit?

Men, as we seek to be the kind of leader that God's expects, we will receive greater respect from our wives.

A Man She Can Respect (Dr. Allen Griffith)

God never designed the woman to be the leader. Her inherent willfulness (Genesis 3:16), battle with fear (2 Peter 3:6) and need for security (Genesis 2:18; Ephesians 5:22) will defeat her and push her toward independence, unless she has a husband who earns and walks worthy of her respect (Ephesians 5:33).

Areas of failure that must be addressed by men.

- Spiritual walk – The Fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23)
- Surrender to the will of God (Romans 12:1-2)
- Study of the Word (2 Timothy 2:15)
- 1. Service to the Lord (Psalm 100:2)
- 2. Separation from sin and worldliness (Rom. 6:6, 1 John 2:15)
- 3. Serious leadership (1 Timothy 3:4)
- 4. Sound financial planning (Luke 16:11)
- 5. Self control (Proverbs 25:28)
- 6. Sacrificial love (Ephesians 5:25)
- 10. Sensitivity to others needs (1 Peter 3:7)
- 11. Stable in all areas of life (1 Corinthians 15:58)
- 12. Sensible in handling life's problems (James 1:5)

V. Should a husband ever be submissive to his wife?

Yes, a husband needs to lovingly submit to his wife's *needs* within the marriage. Ephesians 5:21 brings this truth out into the light as it deals with meeting other's needs in the body of Christ ("submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God"). The husband should always be sensitive to her *needs* but not her *lead*. This is important to understand. *The man must submit to the woman's needs but not her lead.* The husband is to continually take the lead, even while he lovingly submits to her special needs, as a lady and wife. He needs to have a mutual submission to her desires and wants in life (1 Cor. 7:33). As we will see later, a true leader will seek to meet the needs of his wife. He does not say to his wife, "It's my way or the high way." He is a servant leader! In what ways can a man submit to the wife's needs and serve her?

VI. When is it wrong to disobey a husband's authority?

As we have already mentioned, only on rare occasions a wife may need to disobey her husband. She has certain limits by which she operates. Her obedient submission comes to an end when the husband wants her to submit to some form of sin, or godless lifestyle. The realm of the husband's authority is bound by the Scriptures (Acts 5:29). Perhaps an unsaved husband will not allow a woman to attend church. In this case, the woman must explain to her husband why she needs to attend church. Perhaps a husband is trying to lead his wife into the realm of questionable activities, such as taking drugs, or some other worldly vice. Ladies, remember that only when a husband oversteps God's boundaries do you have the right to disobey your husband. The Bible emphasizes obedience in everything other than sin (Eph. 5:24).

VII. Is the husband the real leader in the home?

Yes, the Bible clearly defines the husband as the head and leader of the home unit.

Ephesians 5:23

"For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body."

1 Corinthians 11:3

"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."

The concept behind headship stresses authority and leadership. As the human analogy suggests, the head is the leader of the rest of the body. The head gives the orders to the body so it can function. The body does not give orders. The body responds to what the head tells it to do. In a like manner, the wife is to respond to the leadership and direction of the man. The man was given this position of headship over the wife, even before the Genesis Fall, as Paul points out (1 Corinthians 11:8-10, 1 Timothy 2:13). The very fact that God formed Adam first is the key to understanding his authority and lead over Eve.

Although both the man and woman were created in God's image (Gen.1:27), Scripture suggests that the man was created to reflect the image and glory of God in a way that the woman was not.

1 Corinthians 11:7

"For a man indeed ought not to cover *his* head, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God: but the woman is the glory of the man."

It's clear that the woman was also created in God's image (Gen. 1:27). The text in 1 Corinthians 11:7 is not conveying the thought that the woman was not created in God's image. Rather, it's teaching that the man shared a part of God's image (likeness) that woman does not. *Like God, the man was created as a ruler with delegated authority.* That is why in this section of Scripture she is commanded to maintain upon her head some specific sign (the artificial or natural veil) that she is ruled by another other than herself. This lasting and universal sign was to be her longer hair.

1 Corinthians 11:15

"But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her: for *her* hair (*longer hair that covers her head*) is given her for (*instead of*) a covering."

The woman's hair was to be a lasting sign of the dignity of womanhood, the distinction among the sexes, and the divine principle of submission and headship.

Because the husband is the leader he is not to ride around on his wife's coattail within the marriage. He must not allow the wife to control and dominate the marriage relationship. The woman is not to wear the pants in the household. God pity the home where the hen crows and the rooster is silent! The biggest pitfall on the path to happy family living is the distortion of the Biblical roles within the marriage or family.

A dominant wife is not a godly wife (1 Peter 3:5). She is out of her role as a helper and unwilling to submit to God's plan. When a wife fails to submit to her husband and does not allow him to be a real leader, she attacks his manhood. If a wife destroys her husband's leadership, she destroys something of his own manhood, and thereby diminishes her own love for him. Likewise, when a woman tries to

rule the roost, she loses something of her womanhood. In order for a woman to be a woman, she must learn to submit. God has built these functional features into His design to express Biblical manhood and womanhood.

VIII. What does the leadership of the husband involve?

Headship is not dictatorship. Men, don't become a head case over this teaching! Headship involves the loving exercise of God's authority in the home as we (the man) lives under the lordship of Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 11:3). Headship involves spiritual leadership within the family. As husband, you are to see that your wife and children stay on target spiritually. You must give them spiritual direction and establish a time of devotions or meditation in the Bible for your family (Deut. 6:7-9, 20; Exodus 12:26, 13:14; 1 Cor. 14:35, Eph. 6:4). You must stress and teach your family the importance of prayer, faithfulness, sacrifice, and service to the Lord. You are to be the one to bring them to church and show them how important it is to be in God's house.

As a husband, you must be deeply concerned with the spiritual condition of your family. You must encourage them to grow in the Lord and to use their talents and gifts to serve Him. You must teach them the meaning of faith and peace and godliness. You must teach them the difference between the vices and virtues, worldliness and godliness (Rom. 12:2; Titus 2:11-12). You are the head, and you must see to it that your family serves the Lord ("As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD" - Joshua 24:15).

Headship also involves decision making within the home. The husband must have the final say in the decision-making process. The wife cannot overrule his decisions. There needs to be this type of functional authority established within the home unit. Where there is no authority, there is only anarchy. The truth about headship places a heavy responsibility upon the husband.

When a family lacks dedication to God's house and godly living, and when the family unit is not functioning in a spiritual way, it is the father's fault. The blame rests fully on his shoulders because he is responsible for the spiritual welfare of his family. This is why God

came to Adam when there was spiritual trouble within the family unit (Genesis 3:9). Adam tried to blame Eve (Gen. 3:12), but God blamed Adam, since he was not being the kind of spiritual leader, that God wanted him to be. Adam should have said “no” to Eve and redirected her in the godly and right way to go.

With headship also comes the responsibility of sacrificial love and servant leadership. This means the husband will sacrificially love and serve his wife, even as Christ expressed love and served the Church (Phil. 2:5-8). Paul teaches in Ephesians chapter 5 that the husband’s true headship, or *servant leadership* within the marriage, involves several types of love. Everything in the passage of Ephesians 5:25-33 passage is centered upon how to love your wife.

a. *Leadership involves sacrificial love.*

Ephesians 5:25

“Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it.”

This is Calvary love! It is sacrificial (agape) love. No husband as a true spiritual leader should be selfish or domineering. This means the husband should not always insist on having his way. He should be ready to sacrifice his time, money, and entire life for his wife. A wise leader will take into consideration his wife’s feelings, opinions, and needs. He is to have sensitivity, consideration, and respect for her. He will try to please her in all that he does (1 Cor. 7:33, 1Cor. 11:11-12). The man is to be a servant leader! He is to sacrificially love his wife by giving to her on a daily basis. I don’t truly love someone unless I give myself to them.

b. *Leadership involves purifying love.*

Ephesians 5:26-27

“That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.”

The husband, as a leader, will also seek to keep his wife pure and clean from sin and errant doctrinal teachings. He is to have a cleansing affect upon her life as he guides her by the word of God and into a good church. The man must decide what type of music will be played in the home and what type of entertainment will be viewed on the Television. He must set Biblical boundaries and standards to keep the home pure. Men, don't forget this! You are responsible for establishing godly and righteous standards for the home. The children do not set the standards. This is the responsibility of the man as he seeks to have a cleansing and purifying effect upon his wife and family.

A purifying love means that the man will not allow certain things to be viewed on the Internet. He will not tolerate certain speech nor allow ungodly rock music to be played in the home. He will teach and encourage his family to walk in the "paths of righteousness" (Ps. 23:3) and set a godly example for them to follow. The man's overall living should portray holiness and consecration to God, and this will have a sanctifying effect on the wife and family (1 Cor. 7:14). When one marriage partner seeks to live in a purified or holy manner, it will have a lasting impact on the rest of the family.

c. Leadership involves caring love.

Ephesians 5:28-33

"So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church: For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church. Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence *her* husband."

As a man cares for his own body, so he is to care for and protect his wife. He will attempt to protect her from heartache, harm and disappointment in life. He will cherish her as his own special prize and pearl of great price (Matt. 13:46). The Biblical pattern of male

leadership has always been to care for and protect the wife (1 Tim. 5:8).

Men, when she needs strength, you must give her strength. When she needs encouragement, you must give it to her. Remember that a man is the divinely ordained provider and protector of his wife and therefore must meet her needs in a loving and caring way. She is to be a treasure to you, which must be cherished and cared for in a special way. This is brought out in the word found in Ephesians 5:29 – “cherisheth.” This word actually means to warm with body heat and describes a bird sitting upon her nest. A husband is to provide a secure, warm, and haven for his wife. He is not to shove his wife out into the cold, hard, cruel world and let her defend herself.

The man as the head of the wife not only implies that the wife must submit to him and help him, it also implies that the man is responsible to her, as her head, and must meet her needs. He must provide, protect, and give proper security for her to be the kind of spiritual leader that God wants him to be. As Christ is the Savior of the body, the church, (Eph. 5:23b), so the husband should in one sense be the savior of the wife. He should be her “lone ranger” and come to her rescue in all areas of life. There is to be a tremendous expression of love that should be directed to the wife on a daily basis.

Most marriage problems exist when the husband does not love the wife as he should. Even when a wife is self-centered the spiritual man can continue to express agape or sacrificial love toward his wife. This is because it's a love generated from the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:22).

d. *It involves unbreakable love.*

Ephesians 5:31

“For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh.”

This is a quote from Genesis 2:24. “Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.” Again, the concept behind the Hebrews word “cleave” means to be glued or joined together in a new relationship. It speaks of an ongoing loving bond, a love that is to be unbreakable and lasting. “Charity (love) never faileth” (1 Cor. 13:8). True love

continues to blossom in spite of trial and difficulty. When it is Holy Spirit inspired love, it is unbreakable. Since love is designed to be unbreakable, we must remember that God hates divorce. Divorce destroys what God has ordained to be unbreakable. God intends for the marriage unit to remain glued or cemented together in an unbreakable love and undying devotion to one another.

Divorce among Christians must stop. *It is a travesty or mockery of the undying love that Christ has for the Church.* The old idea that marriage vows were sacred and binding has been thrown out of our modern-day courts. But God still says that love and marriage is for life.

What About Divorce?

God hates divorce. Divorce destroys what God has ordained to be unbreakable. God intends for the marriage unit to remain glued or cemented together in an unbreakable love and devotion to one another.

Malachi 2:16

“For the LORD, the God of Israel, saith that he hateth putting away” (divorce).

Genesis 2:24

“Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.”

Matthew 19:6

“Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.”

The permanency of marriage is God’s design which He has established from the beginning of time. This design has not been changed. Moses and Jesus were only trying to control or legislate the problem of divorce, within the Jewish nation, when making various divorce statements (Matthew 19:8-9). Because people’s hearts are bent on going against God’s design, there was to be some kind of control factor placed on the matter of divorce, to stop the problem from becoming more complex than it already was.

In the so-called exception clause, Jesus was not trying to *condone* divorce (Matthew 5:32 and 19:9); He was actually trying to *control* or regulate the whole problem even as Moses was under the economy of Israel. Since husbands were divorcing their wives for every little matter, Jesus was simply saying that a husband could not divorce his wife unless the two were found in a unique position. The alleged exception clause does not give grounds for divorce and remarriage due to adultery as so many suggest today (Matt. 5:32; 19:8). The term “fornication” (porneia) in the Jewish context of Matthew is used in a *specialized sense*, as it is elsewhere in the Bible (1 Cor. 5:1; Acts 15:29) and refers to incest or committing sexual immorality with near kin or relatives which was prohibited in God’s moral code (Leviticus 18:6-18; 20:21). It was not the normal word for “adultery” (moicheuo); therefore, it’s improper to read adultery into the exception clause.

Jesus was being interrogated by the Pharisees in Perea (Matt. 19:1-3; Mark 10:1) which was the territory under the jurisdiction of Herod. Herod Antipas had two brothers named Philip. The one Matthew referred to here was Herod Philip I. Philip was Herod Antipas’ half-brother. Therefore, Antipas’ marriage to Philip’s wife Herodias was incestuous based upon the near kin Mosaic moral law (Lev. 18:16; 20:21), which refers to prohibited marriages based upon the Mosaic Law of near kin marriages. People were not to marry within the family relationships. John the Baptist lost his head over this issue one or two years prior to this meeting with the Pharisees (Matt. 14:1-8).

Near kin marriages was a hot issue in Jesus’ day. People were not to marry within their family relationships. Jesus avoided a confrontation with Herod and revealed that these near kin marriages (marriages of fornication – incest among family members) were not legitimate in God’s eyes (like homosexual marriages today) and could be legally dissolved by divorce. The exception clause is not an exception to dissolve or end a *true* marriage, but a legal divorce exception given in the case of an illegitimate or non-recognized marriage relationship before God, which was forbidden under Jewish Law. Jesus was simply saying that there could be no divorce and remarriage except in the case of these illegal or illegitimate marriages. *God puts all marriages together (Matt. 19:6) except when two people commit incest (marriage among near kin or relatives).* In this case, an

exception can be made, where the two sever their marriage from a legal standpoint and no longer live together in incest.

Note: The accounts in Ezra chapter 10:2- 4 and Nehemiah 13:23, 30 pertains to a unique situation, under the law, when there was an attempt on the part of the restoration leaders of Israel to keep the messianic line pure so the Messiah would be born. This was a *special protective action* that would ensure the purity of the nation's bloodline and the entrance of the Messiah or Savior into the world.

God could not allow the Messianic line to become corrupted by mixed origin. The Hebrew faith and race could not become contaminated if the Jewish Messiah was to be born. This is why such drastic measures were taken regarding these marriages. These Scriptures should never be used, as proof texts for divorce since God's Word is so clear concerning His will and desire for the permanency of the marriage relationship. As always, we must ask, "What is God's norm for marriage?" God's conclusion is simple. He hates divorce and does not condone it. Our attitude must not be to get *out* of the marriage but to get *through* the problem, solve it, settle it, and go on with life.

Romans 7:2

"For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to *her* husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of *her* husband."

1 Corinthians 7:39 declares:

"The wife is bound by the law (*the law of marriage established in Genesis 2:24*) as long as her husband liveth; but if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord."

Marriage is for keeps! It is really designed by God to be "Until death do us part" – not "Until their happiness runs out."

IX. Are women really different than men?

The cover on a Time Magazine many years ago read, "Men are Different than Women." Yes, women are different than men.

Matthew 19:4

“And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made *them* at the beginning made them male and female.”

The husband needs to remember this and be sensitive to her due to his wife’s physical make-up which is different than a man’s make-up or design (1 Peter 3:7). This text in Peter tells us that the wife is a “weaker vessel” in her physiological and emotional makeup. This is not a *demeaning* statement but a *creative* statement. Women undergo physical and emotional experiences which men do not. God made ladies different from men. A woman is more emotional, can become frustrated and hurt very easily, and is more fragile.

Since the woman has a different emotional makeup and design than a man she must be treated with gentleness and kindness. She can be fragile, tender, and emotionally weak at times. We must understand this and not become bitter when she demonstrates these traits. I know that modern women of today don’t want to be seen as a “weaker vessel.” But don’t let them fool you; women are the weaker vessel. For this reason, husbands need to treat their wives with special consideration. Both the husband and the wife are vessels, but husbands are more like iron skillet whereas wives resemble china vases, being more delicate in their makeup and design.

A loving leader will dwell with his wife “according to knowledge” (1 Pet. 3:7) or in a very understanding and compassionate way because of the difference in the female design. He needs to honor and respect his wife as a female, or lady, which God has created. In so doing, he will respect her feelings, desires, thoughts and show real courtesy to her in the marriage relationship. He will try to please and comfort her. He will show sensitivity to her deepest physical and emotional needs. She is worthy of this wonderful respect. As men, we must remember to be sensitive to our wife and not allow bitterness to build up within our hearts (“Husbands, love *your* wives, and be not bitter against them” - Col. 3:19).

This word “knowlege” in 1 Peter 3:7 is one of the key elements in a marriage relationship. Many women will claim that their husbands do not understand them or talk to them any longer. They claim that he does not understand how she feels or what she is thinking about.

This kind of insensitivity builds walls in marriages. Men, do you really know your wife's needs? Have you sat down and discussed them with her? Listen to her heart. Don't close your ears to her. Two married people can live together and really not know each other. A man is to express loving compassion toward his wife by understanding her needs and reaching out to meet those needs.

1 Peter 3:7 says we are also to give "honour unto the wife." The reason he is to show respect to her is because she is "feminine" as the word "wife" is literally rendered in the Greek language. Because she is a lady (possessing traits belonging to a woman), she needs to be treated like one. Giving honor unto the wife means that we are to express loving respect and appreciation for our wife since she is the queen of household.

There are several ways a man can do this. One way is by caring for her needs (physical, emotional, spiritual). Another way is complimenting her (her cooking, appearance, housekeeping, wisdom, modesty, thoughtfulness, kindness, romantic charm). Another way would be thanking her for her friendship, good work, good meal, doing the laundry, and her household duties. A man can also reverence her by giving to her (a card, flowers, or a single rose). A man also honors or reverences her by helping her in some of the household duties when she seems to be having a hard day.

Another key word which is often overlooked is the word "together" (1Pet. 3:7). Christian couples not only share God's gift of spiritual life, they must also share their physical and spiritual lives together. The husband needs to remember to keep an open line of communication with his wife and stay close to his wife within the marriage relationship. It's the man's responsibility to do this since he is the leader. Both partners are to maintain a close bond, possess a friendship or togetherness (Song 5:16) in the marriage. *The couple must learn to do things together, spend time together, and share their goals together.* They must pray together, and they can have devotions together.

Some partners in marriage just exist together but they are not really living together, sharing time with each other, along with their feelings, fears, and failures. Marriage is togetherness. And the husband is to

take the initiative to keep the marriage close and connected. He can do this as he shows sensitivity to his wife's femininity and needs.

X. Does the headship of the man mean that he is spiritually superior to the wife?

No, the man's headship does not dissolve the spiritual equality of the man and woman in Christ.

Galatians 3:26 -27

"For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ."

There is no spiritual difference between the man and woman before God as they live in the marriage relationship. Both are equally accepted before God's throne through their grace relationship with Christ. There remains, however, the distinction of roles within the marriage. Our mutual spiritual acceptance in Christ does not dissolve the distinction of the sexes and their roles in society or marriage.

The best illustration we can give is from the deity of Christ. He was "one" with the Father in His essence or being, as the one true God (John 10:30), but was under the Father's authority during His earthly mission (John 14:28). The Father was greater in position only. The design of headship does not indicate any superiority or inferiority at all (1 Cor. 11:3). There is always equal standing and acceptance within the members of the Godhead and the same is true among the members of the marriage; however, there always remains a distinction in position and authority.

XI. Should the wife work?

The Bible teaches that the husband is to be the expected provider for the family.

1 Timothy 5:8

"But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel" (a pagan unbeliever).

A lazy husband is a disgrace to God's design. The wife should never be forced to work to provide income. This is the husband's responsibility. If she so chooses, with the husband's approval and before children are part of the family unit, the wife may want to work outside the home as long as it does not deter from her duties as a wife. On the other hand, the Bible reveals that the wife with children is to be a home worker who may do work within the home for extra income (Proverbs 31:24).

Concerning the wife who is a mother, the Bible teaches that she is to remain in the home as a homemaker. The home and raising children is her sphere of operation.

Titus 2:4-5

That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, *To be discreet, chaste, keepers at home*, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed."

1 Timothy 5:14

"I will therefore that the younger women marry, bear children, guide the house, give none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully."

The correlation of children in the home and being a keeper of the home clearly reveals that a wife should remain in the home with the children and possess a key role in raising the children. There are no exceptions. The wife is to remain within the home and have an important role in raising the children. In order to be "keepers at home" and the "guide of the house" a woman must be there! The words that are used speak of a home worker. Wives with children should not work but remain in the home as they perform their motherly tasks and God-given duties in raising children. This is the only real and possible meaning and understanding of these passages.

Children by design need a mother in the home. When she is not there chaos and disruption begin to take shape. There can be no replacement for this wonderful design. As a mother, you must dedicate your life to your children and their welfare. You cannot properly do this when you are on the run, and when you are

constantly away from your children. As a mother, you must sacrifice your own interests for their well-being. You should not be sidetracked from your home responsibilities. **“Careerism” is a great threat facing the family today. Day care centers and grandmas are not to raise your children!** You should remain at home to take on the large responsibility God has given to you.

Any wife with or without children should make wise decisions in what they choose to do outside the home, so they don't compromise their priorities or responsibilities as a wife or mother. Outside commitments and excessive involvement in extra curricular activities outside the home can drown out a woman's time and keep her from being the kind of wife and mother that God wants her to be. You can only do so many things well.

The problem in many homes today is very easy to detect. Mother is not there! The absences of mothers within the home have created huge problems within our society. As a mother, do not buy into the feministic philosophy that personal fulfillment only comes through pursuing a career. This is not what the Bible teaches. There is true fulfillment in life when we follow God's design.

Remember: It's better to live with less, making whatever adjustments are necessary, so a mother can stay within the home and fulfill an important role in raising the children. Do not presume that it is God blessing your home financially when your wife, as a mother, is forced to work and provide a second income.

XII. Should the modern-day wife still perform those old-fashioned responsibilities in the home?

Ironing, cooking, and cleaning? Does a wife really need to be faithful in these areas? Yes, as “keepers of the home” (Titus 2:5) these are her responsibilities. As a wife and mother, you should not have to depend upon your husband to do the home duties. He may graciously decide to help you (and sometimes this may be necessary) but these are your responsibilities. God wants you to see the importance in accomplishing these duties as the queen of the household (the domestic engineer!).

A marriage is not operating properly when the man must do the wife's duties. We must take this to heart, as we live in a unisex society, which has totally forsaken Biblical directives and roles within the marriage (see Proverbs 31:12-15, 21, 27).

A man should not have to come home from work and find no supper awaiting him. A man should not have to cook supper and do the laundry and iron his clothing. The Bible is clear on the matter of the wife performing these household tasks. It brings shame on a wife when she neglects her God given responsibilities. God has designed homemaking and family to be her sphere of responsibility. When the wife shirks these responsibilities, chaos and turmoil can result within the marriage. Home is to be where her heart is!

The American family has become broken down and confused because it is no longer Biblical. As Christians today, we need to model the ideal family for our society, as directed in the Bible.

Proverbs 31 gives us the model of the wife who is the worker at home. The Psalm unfolds God's attitude concerning the qualities and characteristics that every married woman should have.

- Her trustworthiness – She can be trusted with finances. She will not waste money. She is a careful steward. His money and possessions are safe with her (11). She wants to manage the home affairs well and free the man from household duties that are hers.
- Her supportiveness – She supports or backs up her husband in all that he does and meets his needs. She does everything she can to strengthen and help him. She never defames his character among people (23). In fact, she gives him a good reputation among people, since she has allowed him to excel in his job. He did not have to do her job. Also, she has praised him as a fine man, so that people see him as such. Her husband's good consumes her life. Doing good for him is her desire (12).
- Her productivity – She is a worker in the home meeting the needs of her household (13-15, 19, 21, 27- 28). Her energies

are poured into the home life. She wants to faithfully meet her family's needs. She sacrifices herself for her family. Her time and energies are poured into the family and not all kinds of extra activity. Her personal family is her number one priority in life.

- Her enterprise – She is a woman who tries to earn money on the side while being a mother in the home (24,18) and she actually can purchase items of worth or value for the family through her earnings (16). She is a woman who is on the ball. She earns money, but does not spend merely on herself; she uses it for the family's benefit.
- Her strength – She is not a lazy woman who finds it hard to get something accomplished during the day. She is full of strength and energy and faces each day with new vigor and stamina. She is a woman who is motivated to accomplish her motherly duties (17).
- Her generosity – She is a mother who also demonstrates her compassion on the poor and needy. She extends her helping hand to people who are in need. She becomes personally involved in the stress of others (20).
- Her beauty – She is a mother who rewards herself after all her hard work. She also wants to show off her beauty to her husband in the way that she dresses. She is thankful for the beauty, which God has blessed her with, and she dresses in such a way that will enhance that beauty. The purple would highlight her feminine beauty (22).
- Her character – She is full of excellence as a person. She is full of spiritual strength from God and is honored, or seen as a person of beauty, since her life is full of integrity and dignity (25).
- Her outlook on life – She is confident about the future. She does not fear the future because she realizes that everything is in God's hands. Furthermore, she is confident about the future,

since she has raised her children properly and has kept her household in order (25).

- Her speech – She speaks with wisdom and kindness to her household and friends. She shares the wisdom of the Scriptures with her children (Prov. 6:20), always has a kind word for them, and treats them with kindness (26).
- Her reward – She rewards herself by having a husband and children that will praise her for her motherly duties and for her loving devotion to them. There can be no greater reward than this (28-29).
- Her fear – She does not spend hours trying to improve her outward beauty and lose focus on what life is all about. She is a woman who fears God in a respectful and loving way (30).

This is the godly woman as represented in Scripture. She is an exciting and thrilling person who is full of energy and life. She is an administrator, business manager, and analyzer of products. She is a teacher full of wisdom. She is a responsible wife, staying on top of her duties in a systematic way. She is the kind of person that everyone wants to be around!

Proverbs 31:10

“Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price *is* far above rubies.”

The old saying “A woman’s place is in the home” is not altogether true. What the Bible really teaches is that “A woman’s responsibility is in the home.” There is no honor in just staying at home. As a mother, you must do your responsibilities and do them well remembering the eternal investment you are making in the lives of children, and the harmony you are creating in your marriage. You must learn to be an industrious lady (a domestic engineer!) with much zeal and vitality in life.

We need to keep loving, learning, and living according to God’s roles and designs in our marriage relationship. Without applying God’s truth to our marriage and living it out in a daily fashion by the Holy Spirit’s power, our marriage is doomed for frustration and failure.

Children in the Marriage Relationship

The key Old Testament verse dealing with childbearing is Genesis 1:28. "And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth."

Bringing children into the world is God's design and plan for marriage. It is God's general blueprint (I Timothy 5:14) and basic understanding for marriage (Titus 2:4). Bearing children was designed by God and is to be the normal desire and result within the family relationship.

Note: The Bible does mention the gift of celibacy (I Corinthians 7:7), but it never once mentions a God-given gift which would suppress a person's desire to bear children within the marriage unit. God seems to have especially placed within the heart of a woman the instinctive desire to bear children. We call it the motherly instinct. This is evidenced in the Bible for we have no Biblical examples of married couples who decided against having children. The motherly instinct to bear children and have a family is placed within women by God. The expression "flower of her age" (1 Cor. 7:36) speaks of the woman's desire for intimacy in the marriage relationship and the desire to mother a family. Since the Biblical norm is for couples to bear children and since God has seemingly given married women the instinctive desire to be a mother, there may be various things in a mother's life (or couple's lives) which may block this innate desire to bear children.

Here is a question to ask, not only as a married woman, but as a married couple. Are there things in your personal lives that may be blocking your desire to bear children? Below are some examples.

- Greed – We want to live our own life completely for ourselves.
- Getting settled in life – We want to pay off house and prepare ourselves financially.
- Business – We are too busy to open to this motherly instinct or desire to bear children as a couple.

- Past or present marriage trauma – A past or present traumatic experience, within the marriage, may keep a woman from desiring children.
- Past experiences of regret & guilt – Living with guilt and regret can smother a motherly instinct (Phil. 3:13).
- Known risk factors may be involved in bearing children – Many Christian people pray that God would override the risks and realize that the child will be in the hands of God (Exodus 4:11, Psa.139).

We need to be careful that we don't allow the things mentioned above to smother (choke out) the mothering instinct within the wife or the natural desire for a couple to have children. One must be open to God's prompting. Things such as these may not give opportunity for this motherly instinct to really resonate and demonstrate itself within the life of a wife. They may keep the couple from this natural desire to bear children (Gen. 16:1-2, 1 Sam. 1:8-13).

We must be careful that the things of life ("cares of this world" - Matt. 13:22) do not steal away God's normal plan for to bear children as a married couple. We must probe our own thinking and reasoning (investigate our motives) for not wanting children and be very, very honest with ourselves. James 1:5 reminds us that we must ask God for wisdom in these situations!

Question: Do you really believe that not bearing children is the Biblical norm for marriage? If you conclude as a couple, "We have no desire for children," it would seem to be out of the norm and become in conflict with Scriptural teaching. When we possess doubt about bearing and rearing children, it's probably because we need to reevaluate our lives, motives, and recognize God's plan for our marriage in light of God's normal design.

With all these things in mind we must conclude by saying:

- We want to be "fully persuaded" (Rom. 14:5) that we are ready to have children. If we do not unearth the desire to bear

children because of some situation in our lives, it would be better not to bear children.

- We must remember that if we do not bear children, because of some specific reason, we may be missing one of God's greatest blessings for our married life (See Psalm 127:3-5).

Do we want to look back and say: "I wish we would have had children when we were younger." "I wish we would have searched our lives and reconsidered about God's normal plan for our married life."

Here's a plan for you:

- Pray that God will reveal anything in your life that may be blocking these desires to bear children.
- Pray that God will help you to overcome them by His spiritually wisdom and power (James 1:5; II Peter 1:3, Gal. 5:16).
- Pray that God will show you clearly and give you peace about bearing children within your marriage (Psa. 37:3-4).
- Pray that both persons in the marriage might be totally dedicated to the Lord (Rom. 12:1-2) and to each other (Eph. 5:21).
- Be open to God's leading and direction. Follow God's prompting. Don't shut the door on God's guidance (Ps. 32:8).
- Always make your decision together on this matter of bearing children. Don't allow anyone else to talk you into the decision. Only allow God to direct you by His Spirit (Rom. 8:14)

Responsibilities in Raising Children

When you have decided to bear children make a commitment to follow God's blueprint or design for raising children (I Tim. 5:14, Titus 2:5, Prov. 31:27). This involves the wife lovingly sacrificing her life for her children as she takes on a major role in raising them in the home. A wife in the home gives a child stability, guidance, love, and comfort, which are the important things that cannot be consistently provided,

when a mother is working outside the home. A mother is to love her children (Titus 2:4). She is to have the primary home impact on their lives.

1 Timothy 5:14

“I will therefore that the younger women marry, bear children, guide the house, give none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully.”

The word “**guide**” speaks of being a ruler over the basic *household duties*; however, it is not referring to the man’s position of having complete rulership over the home. The wife is really to manage many family affairs and accomplish the home tasks in relationship to raising children and meeting the needs of the family members. Men, you are the head of the wife, but she is really the ruler of the household duties. *She is the queen of the household*. Therefore, you must be sensitive to her motherly and womanly duties and allow her to perform them. You must respect her decisions concerning certain family affairs and needs for the family. You do not want to override her as she seeks to care for the family and meet the needs of the children. You don’t want to question every meal that she gives you or every move that she makes as she tries to fulfill her God given duties. Men, we simply must learn to get out of the way many times and allow our wife to do her ministry.

When it comes to raising children there are four main points to remember.

1. Children must respect and obey their parents – (Eph. 6:1- 3, Col. 3:20, Exodus 20:12).

Ephesians 6:1-3 looks back to Exodus 20:12:

“Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;) That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth.”

Colossians 3:20

“Children, obey *your* parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord.”

A child's outward action is to be one of obedience and their inner attitude must be to honor or respect their parents, when obeying them. Children must be taught to obey and respect their parents. A parent must train a child in the way he "should go" (Prov. 22:6) – not the way he *will go* if left untrained and undisciplined. You will soon discover that children do not have a built-in trait for obedience or respect. They are fully bent toward disobedience.

Popular humanistic psychology is teaching that you should never spank your child as a measure of discipline. God's psychology is radically different!

Proverbs 13:24

"He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes."

Proverbs 19:18

"Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying."

Proverbs 20:30

"The blueness of a wound cleanseth away evil: so *do* stripes the inward parts of the belly."

Proverbs 29:15

"The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left *to himself* bringeth his mother to shame."

Proverbs 22:15

"Foolishness *is* bound in the heart of a child; *but* the rod of correction shall drive it far from him."

Don't be fooled by the modern anti-God and psychological methods of raising children! There is only one way to teach a child obedience and respect for parental authority and that is through the board of education applied to the seat of learning! If you want to raise a hell raiser, as we say, or a spoiled brat, then disobey God's command. God has established the standards for what is right!

The book of Proverbs says that a disobedient child will be:

- A grief to his mother (10:1, 17:25)
- A bitterness to his mother (17:25)
- A rebel toward his father (15:5)
- A sorrow to his father (17:21, 25)
- A disaster to his father (19:13)
- A disgrace to his parents (19:26)

2. Parents must teach their children truth and godliness (see Prov. 1:8,6:20, 3:1-2, 4:1- 4, 13:1, 22:6, Eph. 6:4).

Proverbs 1:8

“My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother.”

Proverbs 22:6

“Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.”

Ephesians 6:4

“And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture (*training, discipline, and education*) and admonition (*warning, rebuke, reproof, encouragement*) of the Lord.”

Both parents (the father’s taking on a lead role in the discipline, training, and education) are to have a teaching impact upon the child’s life. The father is to be the leading teacher within the family; however, the mother is also to have a great teaching ministry to her children. Both the husband and wife are to teach their children about salvation through Jesus. Both are to teach their children Biblical values and morals. Both are to teach them what is right and what is wrong. Both are to teach them dedication, service, humbleness, and love for God (Ecclesiastes 12:1).

Both the husband and wife are to teach children obedience and respect for authority. Both are to teach them how to manifest godly manners in their daily living. However, the husband as the leader within the home is faced with the first and foremost responsibility to

teach his children the Scriptures and the right spiritual path to walk (Deut. 6:7-9; Ex. 12:26-27, 13:14; Joshua 24:15). He is to teach them the values and virtues of right living as opposed to the vices of wrong living, which go against righteousness. And the wife is to back up and support his teaching role.

3. Parents must learn not to provoke their children to unnecessary wrath.

Ephesians 6:4

“And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath ...”

Colossians 3:21

“Fathers, provoke not your children *to anger*, lest they be discouraged.”

This is an important reminder for parents as they raise their children. Children will normally become upset and frustrated when they are properly disciplined. However, what the Bible teaches is that we should not *unjustly* irritate them or provoke them to anger. Parents do this when they pick on their children and call them “stupid” or “dumb” or when they only tell them what is wrong with them without any encouragement in life. Other ways that parents irritate children unjustly is through over-protection (smothering them in life), favoritism, pushing for achievement, or not allowing them to be children and have fun in life. Other ways to irritate them is through neglect, distrust, cruel words, unfair punishment, and a warning that you will withdraw your love if they do something wrong (“Daddy won’t love you anymore if you do that”).

Children will also be aroused to a place of anger, when they feel that they are only a bother to their parents, or an intrusion into their life. Lack of love and the expression of grace by the parents, toward their children, can create resentful attitudes that are hard to break.

4. Parents must love their children.

Titus 2:4

“That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children.”

We should remember that above all else, children need love. Home to them is to be a haven, a place of love and acceptance. It is not to be a place where they are constantly harassed and regarded as a nuisance. Children desperately want our love and attention. They live to be loved!

Remember, God gives children as a gift from His hand (Psalms 127:3, Gen. 4:1, 1 Samuel 1:19-20). They are to be a source of joy to us and a blessing from God (Psalms 127:4- 5, 113:9, Prov. 23:24). This is what we will experience at home when we raise them with Biblical values and virtues.

Sex in the Marriage (What Does the Bible Say?)

Before the marriage occurs take all the steps necessary to “keep thyself pure” (1 Tim. 5:22). Don’t set yourself up for fornication (“make not provision for the flesh” - Rom. 13:14). Be careful where you spend time together and be accountable to others. Men, be a gentleman! The physical or sexual intimacy within the marriage is another important aspect of the relationship.

Hebrews 13:4

“Marriage *is* honourable in all, and the bed undefiled...”

Sex outside marriage is a sin but inside the parameters of marriage it is a wonderful gift given by God and should not be looked down upon. Sex was not given by God only for procreation but also enjoyment.

Genesis 2:24 -25

“Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh. And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.”

The word “cleave” includes the concept of physical intimacy in marriage. The first married couple shared a wonderful sexual intimacy together without embarrassment or rejection.

Proverbs 5:19 also adds:

“Let her be as the loving hind and pleasant roe; let her breasts satisfy thee at all times; and be thou ravished always with her love.”

God places His stamp of approval upon the physical relationship within the marriage. God created sex and human beings are accepted by God as beings with a sexual nature. The sexual part of us is a very powerful element of our make-up or design. The Bible endorses the concept of sexual pleasure and assumes a healthy physical passion for the marriage relationship. Our feelings of sexual desire are permissible in God’s eyes and we are encouraged to enjoy them (Prov. 5:18-19; Song 3:1, 4:16, 5:10-16, 7:1-11).

Sex is not sinful, dirty, or wrong within the context of marriage. Sex is a gift from God. Sexuality was not the sin in Eden. When we think correctly about marital intimacy, it will lay the groundwork for enjoying it fully.

Song of Solomon 4:16 says:

“Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south; blow upon my garden, *that* the spices thereof may flow out. Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits.”

From a Biblical viewpoint there is no reason to suppress or hold back your passions. The Bible gives no “do’s and dont’s” when it comes to enjoying one another physically in the marriage relationship. One must learn to let go and open up to the normal feelings that God has placed within us. Sexual pleasure is something that should be discovered, explored, and cherished by every married couple. It is something that should grow richer through the years.

Again, some people feel that sex is merely the necessary evil that one must go through for the procreation of the earth (Genesis 1:28). It is true that sex was given to populate the earth; however, it was also designed by God to give continuing pleasure and passion in our relationship. Through the passing years of marriage, couples should learn to express themselves in an open way to their partner and find new ways to bring sexual satisfaction to them. This is one of the great adventures of the married life.

Song of Solomon 8:6-7

“Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm: for love *is* strong as death; jealousy *is* cruel as the grave: the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame. Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it: if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned” (*despised*).

True marital passion or sexuality should not be avoided even as death cannot be avoided. We should be concerned about the physical needs of the other partner. True marital passion is like a blazing fire full of hot coals. The Hebrew reads, “like the mighty flame of Jehovah” which indicates once again that God is the creator of passion and fully endorses it within the marriage.

Sexual Submission in the Marriage

1 Corinthians 7:1-5 is a key portion of Scripture dealing with the subject of sexual surrender to one another in a loving marriage relationship. God wants us to satisfy one another: “Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me: *It is good for a man not to touch a woman (possessing a physical or sexual relationship before marriage)*. Nevertheless, *to avoid fornication (before marriage with different partners)*, let every man have his own wife (*only one wife*), and let every woman have her own husband (*only one husband where together they can share a God-ordained sexual relationship within a monogamous marriage*). Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence (the kindness of submitting to one another’s sexual desires): and likewise also the wife unto the husband (kindly submitting to his sexual desires).

“The wife hath not power (*authority*) of her own body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife. Defraud (*do not deprive*) ye not one the other (*from having sexual relations*), except **it** be with consent for a time (*mutual agreement*), that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer (*for some spiritual purpose*); and come together again (*with physical intimacy*), that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency” (*your lack of self-control*).

The context of these verses is specifically talking about both partners meeting one another's sexual desires within a healthy marriage relationship. Sexual love is a beautiful tool to build with - not a weapon to fight with.

Song of Solomon 1:2 and 4:16 indicates that the woman is to be eager and ready for the man's initiating love. Man is the primary initiator of the sexual act since this is the way God designed the relationship. The wife should demonstrate a submissive response to the man's lovemaking advancements (Eph. 5:22). *Of course, timing, relaxation, and understanding must always be an integral part of the physical relationship* (1 Pet. 3:8). Each person must consider the feelings of one another in the specific area of physical relations. *There should be mutual agreement in the exploration, openness, and understanding within the physical intimacy of the marriage* (Eph. 5:21). As long as the sexual relationship is pure and not perverted with worldly or abusive behavior, all things are permissible within the physical relationship. The couple can be creative and open to one another and enjoy one another. This is the way God designed sexual intercourse (Gen. 26:8).

Couples need to talk about sexual relations and learn to take time for one another amid busy schedules. When the wife fails to respond to the husband's advancements and neglects him, the physical relationship becomes strained (Song of Solomon 5:1-5). On the other hand, the man must understand when a wife is tired and has had a difficult day. In general, the woman is to express eagerness for physical relations (Song 7:10-12) and her desire should always be to please the husband by her commitment to the physical relationship (Song 8:10) and even in her overall appearance.

The wife's attractive appearance helps highlight her feminine qualities. This is important to the man and the marriage. *Some women are failures as wives because they are first failures as women.* The overwhelming numbers of men want their wife to look, smell, and act feminine. **Christian men are looking for femininity – not feminism.**

Proverbs 31:22 indicates that the virtuous woman keeps herself attractive. She dresses in such a way that it will show off her beauty

to her husband. The beauty of the color purple would enhance her own natural beauty to her husband (Song of Solomon 4:1-7).

The feminine beauty of the woman is also found in her longer hair. Her longer hair is a trademark for femininity and female attractiveness 1 Corinthians 11:15 again states: “But if a woman have long hair (*longer hair than the man’s hair*), it is a glory to her (*something of dignity and beauty*): for *her* hair is given her for (*instead of*) a covering. (1 Cor. 11:15). The woman’s hair was to be a visible expression of her femininity and sexual distinction. *A wife should keep her hair longer and attractive for her husband since it is a sign of her femininity.* It is her “glory” or her dignity and beauty as a woman. It is her natural female veil which God has granted to her which teaches submission to her husband. Her hair not only shows her femininity but also demonstrates her willing to follow her husband in the marriage relationship. Ladies, God wants you to be feminine and so does your husband. He wants to see your glory shine before him. Express your femininity in the best possible light!

The secret of a happy, fulfilling, and sustained physical relationship can be summarized in this way.

- Mutual submission (1 Cor. 7:3-4; Ephesians 5:21),
- Mutual agreement (1 Cor. 7:5).

When one partner sexually desires the other there should be submission of the other partner. We are not to “defraud” or rob or deprive one another (1 Cor. 7:5) within the area of sex. Nor should we use sex as a means to get even. We are to joyfully engage in a physical relationship considering each other’s desires and needs for physical fulfillment. Both have mutual physical rights and responsibilities in the marriage relationship. We are to live and serve one another in the physical relationship.

According to 1 Corinthians 7:3, God has given us equal desires for sexual fulfillment. Contrary to popular opinion, the Bible seems to suggest that the female has an equal desire for sexual fulfillment planted within her body by God. Many times, the woman must simply learn to cultivate her hidden deep desire for sexual passion and enjoy sex in a deeper way by relaxing after a busy day and opening up to

the natural desires God has placed within her. It's then she will be free to discover what level her desire can really be (Song 7:10-13).

God would not give us two levels of sexual desires to torture us. He has given sexual equality, not inequality, concerning physical drives within the marriage relationship. Both man and wife are to have their needs met appropriately as they seek physical fulfillment with each other. They should talk about their physical relations and how they can please one another in this important area and always remain open and expressive but at the same time be willing to understand one another's feelings and comfort zones within the physical relationship.

Strained relationships, physical weariness, and physical complications that arise from certain medications and contraceptives can lessen physical drives. These matters must be openly discussed in the marriage and appropriately dealt with to maintain a proper physical relationship.

God's plan for sex is to be loving submission. The above verses would suggest that even when one partner is tired, the anticipation of the enjoyment of love should arouse them, and the desire to meet their partner's physical needs. Sexual fulfillment must be a high priority within the marriage. Sensitivity, understanding, and promised times for physical relations (1 Pet. 3:8) should be maintained.

Sexual Promiscuity

The husband's and wife's physical desires and appetites are to be channeled only toward each other (Song 6:3, 7:10, Gen. 2:24; Proverbs 5:19; Exodus 20:14,17; Luke 18:20; Rom. 13:9; Gal. 5:19; Rev. 2:22). The man and woman are to only find pleasure in the physical body of their marriage partner.

Proverbs 5:19

*“Let her be as the loving hind and pleasant roe; let her breasts satisfy thee at all times; and be thou ravished (*intoxicated*) always with her love.”*

Man, who is stimulated physically through the eye gate, must take extreme caution to not make provision for the flesh (Rom. 13:14; Matt. 5:28). He should get a guard for the Internet, maintain good entertainment habits (TV, internet, etc.), never be alone with other women, and avoid temptation at all costs so he might not commit adultery with another woman (Matt. 6:13). Men who fail morally normally set themselves up to sexually sin (Prov. 7:8) instead of taking the necessary precautions to avoid the sexual sin (Prov. 4:14).

As we have seen, the husband should also live to please his wife in the area of physical relations. He should care about the matters dealing with his wife's happiness and pleasure in the area of sex (1 Cor. 7:1-5). He should want her to feel fulfilled and happy from the sexual standpoint in the marriage.

In addition, a husband should also work on keeping himself physically fit and attractive for his wife (Song 5:10-16). His hair should be short in contrast to the woman's hair (1 Cor. 11:14-15). Long hair on a man is actually a shame to him and is effeminate. There should be a distinction among the sexes. The man should represent manhood in the best possible light.

We should remember as husbands that women enjoy several kinds of love.

- Companionship love = (philia love) where the husband spends quality time with his wife and seeks to spend time with her consistently, sharing his life with her and going places together (1 Peter 3:7). Any wife longs for this kind of companionship (Song 4:8 = "Come with me"). Companionship and friendship (Song 5:16) are an important part of the marriage. The two should spend time together and talk together about everything (the day, trials, blessings, challenges, finances, etc.) as friends do.
- Sacrificial love = (agapa love) where the husband sacrifices his time and life for the wife in order to protect her, provide for her, and meet her needs in life (Eph. 5:25). Sacrificial love is when acts of loving service are rendered unto the wife.

- Passionate love = (eros love) when a husband desires to initiate physical love (Song 2:4).
- Romantic love = when the husband takes her out for dinner, opens the car door, sends her flowers, gives her cards, etc. Women are romantics. The woman's dream is for her husband to be more romantic (1 Cor. 7:33).
- Compassionate love = where the husband spends time listening to his wife and helping her when she hurts and is suffering emotionally (Eph. 5:28-29). This is when the man seeks to nourish and cherish the wife that God has given to him.
- Affectionate love = when a husband will lovingly and warmly embrace his wife and give her kisses of appreciation or just express appreciation for her in some way other than sex (Song 1:1, 2:6,8:3). Mark Twain once said "I can live for two months on a good compliment." This is one way to express affectionate love.

Remember that companionship, sacrificial, romantic, compassionate, and affectionate love will actually prepare a wife to fully experience her passionate or sexual type of love within the marriage. When all of the other four needs of love for which she craves are satisfied within her life, she will find it easier to express herself passionately (sexually) to her husband, and nurse along her equally God given desire for physical fulfillment. When these love needs in a woman's heart have been properly fulfilled, it will give her a greater assurance of her husband's love and will actually enhance the physical relationship.

Gary Chapman has summarized that there are five languages of love:

1. Words of affirmation
2. Acts of service
3. Quality time
4. Gifts
5. Physical touch.

Of course, these expressions of Biblical love go both ways. In other words, both partners are to demonstrate this kind of Biblical love toward each other. However, the expressions of love which are nonphysical always prepare a woman for the expression of love that is physical.

It's important that a wife learns healthy sexual expression toward her husband within the marital relationship. As stated above, sexual fulfillment is an important part of the marriage relationship. There needs to be cooperation, understanding, and submission in this area. *The reason why there is so much sexual infidelity today is because real fulfillment is not being discovered in the marriage relationship.* For instance, married men are faced with secretaries at work and multitudes of other women in the outside world who may be pleasing to the eye. Women may also be in contact with other men on the job and can develop close relationships with them which may lead to temptation. Beware!

One way to overcome sensual lust and marital unfaithfulness is to find complete fulfillment within the marriage relationship. In order to do this, there must be openness, exploration, and understanding of one another's physical needs. Sexual fulfillment within the home does not hunger for more outside the home.

Sexual relations should be a time to share, care, and enjoy each other at a time and place agreeable to both partners. Partners must talk with each other and plan to enjoy the time together. If so, sexual desire should not be a problem for the couple. A long and happy relationship takes commitment from both partners to keep it exciting and interesting.

Finances in the Marriage

The handling of finances can either make or break the tranquility of a marriage relationship. Too much debt creates too much stress! Debt places a tremendous amount of pressure on the marriage. Young married couples need a financial plan. They must understand what discipline is when it comes to not spending money. Their marriage should not revolve around money, but there are financial obligations that must be met in the marriage relationship.

When it comes to finances, there is a wise but simple plan to follow.

1. Learn to live off the husband's income.

This will prepare you for having children, so the wife can remain in the home to raise those children according to the Biblical pattern (1 Tim. 5:8). Don't depend upon the wife's income for a long period of time. You might want to actually save her income in the days prior to children or use it in connection with buying things that will be needed for the arrival of children.

2. Learn to pay your bills on time.

The testimony of the believer among the world is very important. Paying all your bills and taxes on time is a good testimony among the world (Rom. 13:6- 8, Prov. 3:27-28). To do this you must set up a working budget and live by it. Without a working budget, your finances will be shaky. Estimate what you will *need* to spend on various items on a monthly basis including what you need to save monthly for your yearly expenditures.

You need a working budget plan that you can function with. When making a budget include everything you spend. Keep an accurate paper trail so you can know where the money is going. You also must *discipline* yourself and stick with the plan. Living the Christian life (1 Cor. 9:27) and setting up a budget, and sticking to it, is a matter of discipline. You may have to prune various items from your list (going out to eat, expensive trips, etc.) until your projected spending equals your net income.

Pay your bills on time which means you must live within the boundaries of what you can afford (Rom. 13:8). You cannot live beyond your means. Nor can you have everything that mom and dad have. It just doesn't work this way! And remember, unpaid credit cards create financial collapse and hardships on a marriage. The Biblical principles of stewardship (1 Cor. 4:2) are not followed when one cannot faithfully pay their bills and provide the necessary needs for his family (1 Tim. 5:8).

3. Learn to save money for emergency bills and future investments.

It's not a question of "if" unexpected bills will turn up; it's a matter of "when" they will come (Prov. 30:25, 24:3-4, 21:5).

4. Learn to borrow only what you can afford to pay back.

It's very wise to never bite off more than you can chew. Going over your head financially will only burden your marriage down and cause undo stress and turmoil.

Psalm 37:21

"The wicked borroweth, and payeth not again: but the righteous sheweth mercy, and giveth."

You must always consider the cost (Luke 14:28- 30) and ask yourselves the question, "Can we adequately afford this." When it comes to credit purchases, one should not swipe the card unless they can pay the bill. Credit may have to be used for several larger items. However, this should only be done if the debt can be paid back within your monthly budget program and does not strangle the rest of the budget program. The rule of thumb is this. Credit should not be used for anything else which cannot be paid back. Credit cards may be useful for *convenience*, but they can become a *crutch* if they are used without discernment and the ability to return payment on time (Prov. 22:7). Pressure can build up in the marriage relationship when partners cannot pay their bills and you struggle to meet the basic needs of living.

5. Learn to give to the work of the Lord.

Put the Lord first in money matters. Giving faithfully to a fundamental church ministry is God's design for the marriage. In the Old Testament God required a certain amount above and beyond 10% for their giving. It was different within the Old Testament as people would give animals and grain in a process called storehouse tithing. In today's dispensation, God requires no exact percentage. What He requires is a willing and joyful heart according to the way God has prospered you (1 Cor. 16:1-2; 2 Corinthians 9:7). It's certainly not wrong to give 10% as long as one is motivated by grace when doing

it. In fact, many churches would go broke if its members did not give ten percent of their income! However, giving sacrificially out of appreciation for God's grace is the method for giving in the New Testament (2 Cor. 8:6-9; 9:13-14). Many families choose to give 10% for it is a sacrificial gift. Again, without giving sacrificially, no church will be able to survive. Remember: You can't out-give the Lord!

The New Testament calls us to give:

- Systematically (1 Cor. 16:1-2)
- Proportionately (1 Cor. 16:2; 2 Cor. 8:12)
- Liberally (2 Cor. 8:2)
- Willingly (2 Cor. 8:3,11-12; 2 Cor. 9:7)
- Joyfully (2 Cor. 8:2, 9:7)
- Lovingly (2 Cor. 8:8)
- Sacrificially (2 Cor. 8:1, 6-7).

We receive the Lord's returned blessing in many ways as we give to His work (2 Cor. 9:6). Every home and couple should follow God's plan for giving. There should be a budgeted amount of money every week that goes to the church ministry. Remembering the New Testament principles, the husband should make a final decision on what to give to the church and then budget that money accordingly. The money should be faithfully given on a weekly basis. The local church has a budget also!

A final note on money would be this. Do not allow money to control your marriage (1 Timothy 6:10-11, Matt. 6:19-21). Your whole life should not revolve around money and material gain. There is much more to life and marriage than only gaining financial success (Phil. 1:21). Remember, money can buy a home, but it cannot build a home! It's the love of money that causes friction and problems in the marriage (1 Tim. 6:10).

Dealing With Problems in the Marriage Relationship

Bitterness and frustration erode the fellowship and friendship in the marriage. Therefore, when problems and differences arise in marriage they must be discussed. Communication is still the best

policy in any marriage (1 Peter 3:8). Below are some more practical tips on communication that will help resolve marriage conflicts.

- Communicate at the right time – not when everyone is tired or right after a hard day’s work (Eccl. 3:1-8). If a wife hurls something at the husband as soon as he comes in the door, the chances of effective communication are minimal.
- Communicate in privacy - not in front of friends, the in-laws, or children. You don’t bring your personal problems before others. You resolve them privately together (Matt. 18:15; Gal. 3:1).
- Communicate proportionately – not continually addressing every problem and aggravation. Prioritize a list of problems and deal with the most important ones. Don’t think you must talk about every difference and difficulty at the same time. Make sure there is plenty of pleasant conversation and fellowship between the sessions when you are addressing stressful problems (“let your speech be with grace” - Col. 4:6).
- Communicate kindly – not becoming harsh and rude during your discussion of conflicts and difficulties (“speaking the truth in love” - Eph. 4:15, 31-32). Don’t lose your temper or blow your top. When we are angry, things come out of our mouths, which are wrong and harmful. Courtesy in conversation is always right (1 Pet. 3:8).

Summary on How to Resolve Marriage Conflicts

(James 4:1-12)

- Judge your selfish motives (4:1–3).
- Turn from all spiritual adultery with the world and humbly rely on God’s grace (4:4–6).
- Submit to God, resist the Devil, fellowship with the Lord, repent of all sin, humbling yourself before God (4:7–10).
- Stop the unrighteous judging of others and submit to God’s Word (4:11–12).

Restoration in the Marriage Relationship

A young married man once said at a church social, “I’ve never had an argument with my wife.” A wiser older woman, sitting in the back,

overheard the man, and replied, “Will the next liar please stand up!” When two marriage partners are at odds with one another, how do they make up, and restore harmony in the marriage once again?

1. Confession (James 5:16). We must confess our faults or sins to each other, when we are the cause of the division or disruption, in the marriage relationship. We must say, “Sorry, I was wrong.” Apology and confession for wrong doing, bad attitudes, and bitterness is vital to restoring communion in the marriage.
2. Forgiveness (Eph. 4:31-32). We must forgive one another repeatedly in the marriage relationship for things that one partner may have said, or something that was done, to offend the other. Forgiveness is vital to a continued communion and fellowship in the marriage relationship.
3. Transformation (2 Cor. 3:18; 5:17) – Each partner should never seek to repeat previous shortcomings or sins. They should seek to change their attitudes or ways and become more like Christ. Transformation into Christlikeness will mend a marriage.

Spiritual Priorities in the Marriage

Developing spiritual priorities in your marriage is very beneficial, needful, and important. You need to prioritize your life by putting God and spiritual things first. Many families place sports, hobbies, riches, and their own personal goals before God and His plan for their lives. Here is a spiritual priority list that may help you.

1. Seek God’s plan within the marriage - (“seek ye first the kingdom of God” - Matt. 6:33). First things first! In a general way, the Bible says we should seek God’s purpose and will for our lives. We should have the mindset and heart attitude to follow God’s plan for our personal lives in relationship to character development, God’s direction for our lives, and His goals for our lives.
2. Determine to live a godly life in the marriage – Godliness in attitudes and actions is what makes a marriage sweet and lasting. Godliness is when we act like God in character, virtues, and outward actions. This can only come by walking in the Spirit’s

power (Gal. 5:25) and manifesting the Spirit's fruit in our daily lives (Gal. 5:22-23). Godliness should be the goal of every marriage partner.

3. Make church a commitment in your marriage – Many marriages suffer for the simple reason that the couple fails to attend a good Bible believing church where they can be nurtured along in the Christian life and marriage. It's a sin to forsake the assembling of ourselves together with God's people (Heb. 10:24-25). Don't cut church out of your marriage. Make a commitment to be part of the local church, every service, and get involved in church life and ministry.
4. Become a disciple of Christ within the marriage. Jesus said in Luke 14:26-27, "If any *man* come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple."

Jesus taught that to be His disciple, or a radical follower of His, you must establish two life changing priorities in your marriage.

- a. A priority of love (Luke 14:26).

You must place Christ first in your life and marriage relationship. This means that you must love Jesus more than yourself, more than your personal goals and ambitions, and even more than your partner in the marriage relationship. One lady said to her prospective husband, "I just want you to know that my love for Jesus Christ comes first and I can never love you more than Jesus Christ." Your greatest love and devotion must be directed toward Christ. The word "hate" is used in a priority sense and not a bad ethical sense. *A man cannot really love his wife as he should if he does not place Christ first place in his heart.* The man, who places Christ first in his life, will live godly and be able to then love and influence his own wife in a manner that is righteous and godly.

Mark 12:30 says:

“And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this *is* the first commandment.”

Love for God that is demonstrated in worship, service, and obedience (John 14:15) is to be the ultimate spiritual priority in the marriage relationship. We should not allow anything or anyone to take away this spiritual priority. Our love for God is the foundation for our spiritual living and marriage.

When a man places Christ first in his life, Christ will see that the man wonderfully fulfills his wife's needs. You will remember that Christ put the will of the Father first (John 6:38), but He still was a servant of others (Phil. 2:7). The point is this. When we put Christ first in our lives, we too will become a servant of our wife or husband in a way like we never have before. Our love and commitment to Christ will result in serving and loving one another in a dynamic fashion.

b. A priority of sacrifice (Luke 14:27).

The “cross” that we are called to bear speaks of sacrifice. We must be willing to sacrifice our time, talents, treasure, ambitions, self interests, rights, material things, work, and whatever stands in the way of serving Jesus, and give Him first place in our lives. We should not allow anything or anyone to direct our devotion or ambition away from what Jesus Christ wants us to do, not even our marriage partner (2 Cor. 11:3). Both the man wife should serve the Lord together in a harmonious marriage relationship and put Christ first place in the marriage. When a marriage partner sacrifices themselves to God, they will be willing to *surrender* (Luke 9:23 – “let a man deny himself”) and be *submissive* (obedience – “follow me”) to God's Word and His will for their lives.

Many Christian marriages fail because they don't have an emphasis on spiritual priority (Matt. 6:33). They do not discipline their lives and strive to live godly, victoriously, sacrificially, and obediently before God. God's Word gives us the answer on how to live and what is most important for our personal lives and marriages. Follow it!

16 Ways to Put Love in Action (1 Corinthians 13:4-8)

This love chapter is for lovers within the marriage. It definitely teaches what true and lasting love really is. The Biblical pattern for Christian love is spelled out in I Corinthians 13. Although the love defined and explained in these familiar verses is true of all relationships, it may be especially applied to marriage. Think about the practical ways the elements of love, seen in verses 4-8, applies to a husband-wife relationship. **“With this ring I thee wed, and pledge to thee my love.”**

Solomon wisely observed in the Song of Solomon 8:7, “Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it.” Marriage is all about love! It’s all about love! It’s loving one another in a Biblical way. Loving one another sacrificial way. Loving one another in a caring way. Loving one another in a supportive way. Loving one another in a committed way.

1 Corinthians 13 is the love chapter of the Bible and reminds us of the way we express love to one another in a marriage. This is an “agape” love (a sacrificial love) that is shared within the marriage which keeps a marriage lubricated and moving in the right direction.

Agapa (sacrificial) love is the same type of love Jesus demonstrated to us when He died on the cross for all of us. John 3:16 says, “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

1 Corinthians 13:4-8 describe how this Christlike and sacrificial love is manifested in the marriage relationship – how it is expressed toward one another.

- **Love is patient** (“suffereth long”). Agape love expresses patience toward the shortcomings and irritations of each partner. And there will be some along the way! D.J. is not

perfect! Hannah is not perfect! But love overcomes imperfections!

- **Love is kind** (“is kind”). It does not yell at him for not picking up his socks. It expresses itself in personal acts of kindness and benevolence toward one another through the words we say and don’t say, through giving to one another.

1 Peter 3:8 follows the explanation of the marriage relationship and says: “Finally, *be ye* all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, *be pitiful* (sowing mercy), *be courteous*.”

How do we create a blessing in our marriage? One ransom of kindness at a time! Ephesians 4:32, “And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.”

Someone said: “Kindness is more than just deeds. It is an attitude, an expression, a look, a touch. It is anything that lifts another person.”

1 Corinthians 7:3

“Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence: and likewise also the wife unto the husband.”

Kindness is an essential part and key ingredient in the marriage relationship. Attitudes and acts of kindness are what make a marriage sweet. Without kindness a marriage becomes sour. Don’t forget the Golden Rule in your marriage (Luke 6:31). God has commanded both husband and wife to be kind to each other. Kindness is the opposite of nagging, of being inconsiderate, of sarcasm, selfishness, pouting, losing your temper, calling each other names, and not forgiving. It is the opposite of dredging up the past and harboring bitterness in your heart. Kindness is being thoughtful to your spouse, being helpful, having a sweet spirit, being pleasant, praising and complementing, thinking of ways to show appreciation, and being selfless. A primary ingredient for a successful marriage is being kind.

- **Love is NOT envious** (“envieth not”). There is to be no jealousy over one another’s accomplishments and positions. Both of you are in this together! This means there is to be no

competitive spirit, no envy, no seeking to outdo one another. Jealousy should never enter the marriage.

- **Love does NOT boast** (“vaunteth not itself”). We are not to promote ourselves and possess a haughty spirit within the marriage relationship. Instead, we are to boast about the Lord Jesus Christ and what He means to us. Furthermore, the Bible says we are to “esteem each other better than ourselves” (Phil. 2:3) – promoting our marriage partner over ourselves, encouraging them, and uplifting them – instead of promoting ourselves.
- **Love is NOT proud** (“puffed up”). I have a large puffer fish in my study dangling from the ceiling. It reminds me of what this verse says about being “puffed up.” Remember that the middle letter in the word “pride” is the letter “I”! Pride is not the expression of love. It’s just the opposite of love! In a loving marriage we focus on the other person (not ourselves). We are interested in their advancement and not our own. This is how love manifests itself.
- **Love is NOT rude** (“Doth not behave itself unseemly”) or in unbecoming or unsuitable manner. You should love each other without behaving in an inappropriate manner. This means that both of you should speak to one another respectfully, in private, as well as in public.

This is something all marriage couples need to work on in their marriage. Agape love does not take advantage of one another. This is unbecoming. It always acts kindly and out of respect and not harshness. Loving speech (not unbecoming speech) should always be a very important part of your marriage.

The old saying “Sticks and stone may break my bones, but words may never harm me. Is not true! Words do harm and love does not express itself with rude and unloving speech.

- **Love is NOT self-seeking** (“seeketh not her own”). D.J. this means you will gladly take Hannah shopping on a Saturday and let her look at lady things while you play on your iPhone!. Marriage is oneness and togetherness. It is not selfishness and individualism.

This means the wife will stand by her man! True agape love has its focus on the needs, wellbeing, and good of the other partner. It is not self-directed or self-oriented. No marriage partner can live for themselves. A person who lives in their own world will not have a marriage that is wholesome and fulfilling.

- **Love is NOT easily angered** (“is not easily provoked”). This means that love does not raise its voice and become angry in a spirit of retaliation. Love does not allow you to be aroused in anger just because your interests are crossed, your time is interrupted, or your desires have been put off. Love does not have a short fuse. It has a long fuse!

The fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23) will cause love to blossom in your hearts so you can express both “patience” and “temperance” (self-control) that you need in your relationship – not anger.

- **Love keeps NO record of wrongs** (“thinketh no evil”). Instead of recording the wrongs of others as this expression means, when love is working in your heart it forgives those wrongs immediately that someone has done against you and doesn't mention them again.

Love NEVER says, “I’ll forgive but I will never forget.” No, this is not true loving forgiveness. Love does not keep a record of another person’s wrongs.

Matthew 18:21-22 records this: “Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven. If you do some quick math, that

means you must forgive your husband or wife at least 490 times! Of course, the point of this statement is that we should always be forgiving in the marriage relationship toward one another's shortcomings. Yes, love thinking no evil – this means there is no record of wrongs and no spirit of revenge – love is never manifested in this way!

1 Peter 3:9 puts it like this: “Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing.”

A wife needs to have a grocery list in the marriage but not a list of wrongs about her husband. We don't hold grudges and keep remembering the wrongs of others. We forgive, forget, and follow on with our love and commitment to one another in the marriage relationship.

- Love does NOT delight in evil (“rejoiceth not in iniquity”). True love never pressures the other partner into any wrong behavior, sinful behavior, culturally corrupt behavior. We express love to one another in the marriage relationship by keeping ourselves pure and our relationship pure in respect to how we treat one another, where we go together, and how we express ourselves to one another.

Matthew 5:6, “Blessed *are* they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled” (and your marriage will also be truly filling or satisfying!)

- **Love rejoices in the truth** (“rejoiceth in the truth”). Love faces the reality of one's sins and shortcomings and seeks to change in accordance with God's righteous standard and truth. We need to have “reality checks” in our marriage and make sure we are living and abiding according to God's standard. Reality checks (checking to see if we are walking in the truth and our character and attitudes are right) help us to stay on the right

path and keep our personal lives and marriage centered upon the truth.

2 John 1:4, “I rejoiced greatly that I found of thy children walking in truth, as we have received a commandment from the Father.” Love is always centered in truth – not deception, defiance, or deceit. Your marriage is to always be centered on God’s unchanging standard, the Bible. When you do it God’s way – your marriage will be a blessing!

- **Love always protects** (“Beareth all things”). This means that love endures a lot. It can take a lot. It means that agape love does not outwardly strive to hurt the other partner because of their own faults and failures. This is because true love can put up with a lot of things and make adjustments. You have heard of the expression – “Tough love?” This is what “Beareth all things” means.
- **Love always trusts** (“believeth all things”). Love is rooted in faith. Love believes God can keep conforming our marriage partner into the image and likeness of Christ. Love always gives the benefit of the doubt and thinks in a positive way. It does not push wrongdoing under the carpet, but it believes that God is able to do exceeding and abundantly above all that we could ever ask or think” (Eph. 3:20).

One thing you must do in your marriage is keep on believing! Keep on believing in God’s Word, believing in one another, believing that God wants to do great things in your marriage.

- **Love always hopes** (“hopeth all things”). The Bible meaning of the word “hope” is confident expectancy. Love realizes that we can change and become all that God wants us to be. Love earnestly desires that all things will work out for God’s glory. Love gives our hearts tremendous hope for today and bright hope for tomorrow! Your marriage should always be filled with this enduring hope!

- **Love always perseveres** (“endureth all things”). This means that it grows stronger even in the midst of adversity. It continues to blossom when marriages pass through times of adversity, stress, or some difficulty. Love is the glue that keeps the marriage together and it’s also the icing on the cake!

Love never fails (“Charity never faileth”). In the end, love never stops loving through youth, health, sickness, and old age. A man will not trade his wife in for a newer model – and vice versa!

Now remember that you are two different people with two different personalities. There will be some clashes and differences. But true love continues to blossom in spite of trial and difficulty, the ups and downs of life, and during the difficult times. When it is Holy Spirit inspired and driven love, it is unbreakable. It lasts forever. As you grow old together and your faces and hands begin to wrinkle, you will discover that you can love one another in even a deeper way.

An elderly man and woman who were married for nearly 60 years and he said to me: “Pastor, I have never loved my wife more than I do now.” True love never fails. Your undying and unbreakable commitment to one another is greater than any problem. You can wrestle with the problem, get it solved and settled, get on the other side of it, and go on with life and your marriage. Marriage is not a trial; it is a lifelong loving commitment between two people (a man and a woman) who are deeply in love with one another.

My wife and I were watching the old show “The Waltons.” Most of us are familiar with that older family show. The one son was asking his father for some advice on how to better his recent marriage. I never forgot what Mr. Walton said. “Son, it’s not that hard. You just have to show them that you love them.” And that is what 1 Corinthians 13 teaches regarding marriage.

As a Christian husband or wife this should describe your love for each other. Love should express itself in patience, kindness, trust, and hope in your everyday lives. It shouldn't wait for a crisis to be

expressed. The principles of Christian love should be experienced and practiced in the marriage relationship. This love is part of the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22). If love is not put into daily practice, destructive behavior can be created within the marriage. Certain activities, such as irritating behavior, which is rude and distasteful, strong emotional anger, selfishness, and nagging criticism can become a real problem and threat to the marriage.

Proverbs 19:13

“... the contentions of a wife *are* a continual dropping.”

Proverbs 21:19 also states:

“It is better to dwell in the wilderness, than with a contentious and an angry woman.”

Proverbs 21:9

“It is better to dwell in a corner of the housetop, than with a brawling woman in a wide house.”

“But wait a minute,” you say, “I'm doing my part, but my husband is not doing his part. Do you expect me to keep loving him, even when he doesn't love me in return?” We might rightly conclude that it's hard to love when all the love seems to be flowing one way and is lopsided. It's hard when you're the only one doing the giving, the sacrificing, and the reaching out. It's hard when your partner's ego, pride, or selfishness keeps your love from being returned or reciprocated. You've tried talking about it but nothing happens. You're ready to throw in the towel.

If you're thinking like this, it might help you to remember about the Lord Jesus Christ. If anyone ever had a reason to stop loving, He did! But He loved us without reservation, even to the point of dying on the cross on our behalf (Rom. 5:8; Phil. 2:5-8). This is the kind of love we are to have for one another in the marriage – an undying and unselfish love.

Some Notes on the Fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23)

Two completely different people trying to live together in harmony can only be accomplished through the divine intervention of the Holy Spirit. There is a spiritual solution to all of our relationship problems (2 Pet. 1:1-4) which all the psychology in the world cannot fix. It is the fruit of the Spirit (God's power and nature) being worked out in our lives as Christians. It is God's transforming grace through the Spirit's power and fruit being manifested in our lives (Titus 2:11-12). Each marriage partner must avail themselves to the fruit (character building qualities) that is already available to them in the person of the Holy Spirit.

It is important to observe that the fruit described is not produced by a believer but by the Holy Spirit working through a Christian who is in vital union with Christ (John 15:1-8). The Holy Spirit produces one cluster of fruit which is actually Christlikeness. The old nature can only produce bad or rotten fruit.

- **Love** = Agape love that is sacrificial toward one another.

When we sacrifice our time and personal lives for one another the marriage can be sweet. Below is a summary of some key ways to express agape or sacrificial love.

1. *Be selfless* – you can't always have your way. We must give in or sacrifice ourselves in relationship to both our deed and attitude.
2. *Be kind* – express courtesy and politeness toward one another. We must practice being kind and keep working at it. Stop the bitter tongue and sarcasm. Do things to encourage one another and build one another up.
3. *Be thoughtful* – Think of how you might brighten the day of your spouse. Think of things that might encourage them.
4. *Be patient* – Resist the urge to be upset with your spouse. They may be having a difficult day or experiencing some pressure in their lives. Don't vent your frustration.

5. *Be cool* – Control your temper. Also control negative emotions such as jealousy, envy, anger, and bitterness. In addition, don't allow the irritations that stem from one another's faults to build up in your heart. We all have little quirks, flaws, and shortcomings. We must learn to be cool and not allow them to disrupt our marriage. There is a time to talk about them, and even resolve some of them, but we must also learn to live with some of the irritations and adjust.

Agape love tends to reciprocate itself (1 John 4:19). When one partner practices agape love the other will also practice it. In a marriage where there is a lack of agape love, the flame will eventually fade out. This type of love is always active or willing to reach out.

6. *Be faithful* – Don't commit adultery. Be faithful to one another in the marriage relationship and give yourselves to each other physically.
- **Joy** = There is a need to experience joy in a marriage. This is an internal spiritual quality of sweet gladness within that manifests itself outwardly. The joy of the Lord makes each partner sweeter to live with.
 - **Peace** = Peace gives each marriage partner the ability to rest when money is tight and everything seems to be against us in life. It is an inner tranquility that reign in our hearts which ultimately creates harmony in our relationships.
 - **Longsuffering** = This is really patience that will help us in our dealings with each other's annoying habits in life. We will not give up on our partner with this virtue as part of our life. When we are patient with our spouse, fights and strife will be diminished. Irritations and annoyances will not become blown out of proportion. Also, bickering and arguing will not destroy our marriage.
 - **Gentleness** = This involves a type of kindness that is a major part of your character or make up. Politeness and concern, instead of harshness and criticism, is to be manifested in your

attitudes and over-all disposition of life. This expression of kindness is perhaps best explained in the attitude that Jesus had toward little children (Mark10:14).

Note: Kindness is a key ingredient in any marriage relationship. Kindness in disposition and actions is crucial to an enduring marriage. Kindness is being polite and using soft words instead of sharp words. Kindness means I will compliment my partner instead of criticize them. Kindness means I will be courteous rather than rude. Kindness is doing things for our spouse which we know they like. It means helping our spouse, buying gifts for them, and making them feel better. Kindness is telling our spouse that we are proud and appreciative of them. Kindness is seeking to lift the spirit of our spouse. Kindness is doing something to brighten their day. Kindness is being thoughtful.

- **Goodness** = Goodness is living a life of excellence in character and actions before others. It is the opposite of badness. Goodness brings to mind such things as purity, decency, kindness and benevolence. When we live out a life of goodness we will be pleasant, agreeable, honest, and upright in everything that we do. We should be a good wife and a good husband in relationship to our character and integrity.
- **Faith** = This of course means trust or reliance upon God. Faith in God's spiritual and physical provision will keep a marriage knit together. Faith also means that each marriage partner will continue to believe that God will change their spouse, improve their marriage relationship, and make it stronger. Also, within the setting of marriage, we can also express faith or trust in one another. This particular quality will produce a new confidence in each other which resolves around every aspect of the marriage relationship.
- **Meekness** = This speaks of possessing a mild, gentle and humble attitude and disposition, which translates in gentle words and actions expressed toward the marriage partner. It is a humble attitude which results in humble actions. Meekness reacts to negative incidents in a mild fashion. We are called upon to "esteem other better than themselves (Phil. 2:3) and "In

honour preferring one another” (Rom. 12:10). Meekness is self control over our emotions or attitudes of anger, self-pity, and bitterness. Someone has called meekness a sweet reasonableness or sweet spirit. This is a person who is very considerate and kind in their overall actions and speech in life. This kind of person will manifest a humble spirit and take a lowly place as Jesus did when He washed His disciples’ feet (John 13:1–17). Every marriage needs partners who possess this kind of sweet and humble spirit. We will find ourselves serving our marriage partner with the virtue of humility.

- **Temperance** = This of course means self-control or self-discipline. Living the Christian life involves discipline in our spiritual, physical, and consuming (eating) habits. Every marriage partner needs temperance. When we are tempted to deceive one another, be unfaithful in the marriage, or be angry at one another, we must allow the Holy Spirit to produce self-control or discipline in our hearts. We need to hold back our anger, bitterness, and evil passions from being manifested within our heart and life. This can only be done through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Our responsibility within the marriage is to walk in the spirit (Gal. 5:25). When we walk in His power, provision and fruit, we will be a much more likeable marriage partner who can be respected and praised by our mate. To walk in the Spirit means to possess a moment-by-moment dependence upon Him for spiritual victory and deliverance. Walking in the Spirit is the key to a godly and spiritually fulfilling marriage. When we walk in the Spirit we will manifest this cluster of fruit, which the Holy Spirit produces in our hearts and live. Instead of being mad, argumentative, stubborn, proud, easily provoked, self-directed, bitter, crabby, deceitful, and immoral, we will be filled with sacrificial love, joy, peace, patience, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and self control. This spells victory and results in a happy marriage. There are many times in a marriage, when we must prayerfully and practically, by God’s power, put off the old, and put on the new (Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10, 12).

A Bible principle declares that living a righteous and holy life, results in a peaceful marriage (“the work of righteousness is peace” - Isa

32:17). The result of doing what is right brings peace. When we express righteousness in our marriage through our character, considerations, obedience, fidelity, attitudes, actions, speech, communication, and Biblical roles, we can have a peaceful and happy marriage. *The issues of marriage are essentially spiritual issues.* If we live spiritual, then we will reap spiritual peace and satisfaction, in our marriage relationship.

A Simple Marriage Plan for Starters

- Have devotions and prayer privately (Joshua 1:8, Psalms 5:3).
- Have devotions and prayer together (1 Peter 3:7).

*Peter actually expected the man and wife to be praying together!

- Do many things together. Spend much time together.
- Keep the lines of communication open. The breakdown of communication is the number one enemy of marriages.
- Express kindness in both attitude and actions toward each other.
- Keep the romance and your love life tuned up.
- Attend church faithfully with your hearts and Bibles open.
- Be open to the teaching of the Holy Spirit.
- Renew your relationship with God.
- Lighten your load in life. Things have been too busy for you.
- Stop and smell the roses. Start enjoying life again. Watch the sun set, look at the beauty of God's creation and ease the frantic pace of life.

Remember:

“Marriages are made in Heaven, but it’s up to us, to make them work on earth.”

Someone said:

“Success in marriage is more than finding the right person; it is a matter of being the right person.”

8 Ways to Strengthen Your Marriage

(By Terrie Chappell)

Be polite. Are you more polite to coworkers or store clerks than you are to the one you love? Practice good manners at home. Harsh words and actions have no place in your home. Choose to be kind to those you love.

Smile Often. Put on a happy face, and let it determine your disposition. Remember how meaningful the glances were that you once gave each other.

Listen. Be an active listener. Turn off the TV, put down the newspaper, and give your spouse your full attention.

Call, Text, or Email Your Spouse. Check in with each other throughout the day – just to say, “Hi” or “I love you.”

Apologize. Almost as good as “I love you” is “I’m sorry please forgive me.” Marriage isn’t a game where you keep score. It’s not important who’s right.

Reminisce. Remember your favorite moment together. Talk about special times you shared, and create new memories together.

Pray for Your Spouse Daily. Don’t let a day go by without praying for your marriage, your spouse, and your family.

Anticipate. Do what your spouse wants before being asked. Sense what your spouse’s needs are and jump right in to help. Put his or her needs before your own comfort.

His Needs and Her Needs

Dr. Willard Harley in his book entitled “His Needs, Her Needs” points out some of the *natural* marital priorities of the two sexes in the order of importance:

A man desires:

1. Sexual fulfillment
2. Recreational companionship
3. An attractive spouse
4. Domestic support
5. Admiration of his wife

A woman desires:

1. Affection
2. Conversation
3. Honesty and Openness
4. Financial Support
5. Family Commitment

These are nice little tidbits to remember!

David Sorenson wrote:

“Good marriages are not lucky coincidences, nor are they easily produced. There are no shortcuts. But God’s principles, surprisingly few and simple, are clear scriptural patterns that any child of God can follow. And if practiced patiently and consistently, they work!”

The Cherokee marriage-ceremony is very expressive. The man and woman join hands over running water to indicate that their lives are thenceforth to flow on in one stream (Gen. 2:24 – the “one flesh” union relationship). Marriage is oneness and togetherness. It is not selfishness and individualism.

Song of Solomon 5:16

“His mouth is most sweet: yea, he is altogether lovely. This is my beloved, and this is my friend.”

Seven Suggestions for an Ailing Marriage

- Never consider divorce as an option. It is not a solution to your problem. Divorce is not an acceptable alternative, since God says it is not.
- Do not compare your mate or your marriage to others. There is not another person on earth like you. Your mate is also unique. This means your marriage is unique. Let God make your marriage into what He wants it to be. He will make it into something beautiful.
- Forgive your mate. You are to forgive as Christ has forgiven you. You are a sinner. He or she is a sinner. You are not perfect - so be willing to forgive one another. And do it right away, before any bitterness can build up.
- Stop all criticism. Love does not criticize and find fault. Therefore, if you are critical of your mate, you do not have a heart of love. Stop all criticism. Instead, try a little praise. It works like magic!
- Start communicating with your mate. Communication is completely broken down in many homes and marriages. Start listening to what your mate is saying as well as to what he or she is not saying. Break down the misunderstandings and barriers.
- Season your relationship with kindness. Express kindness to your mate in your mannerisms. Be polite. Compliment instead of tear down. Use soft words instead of harsh words. Seek to lift the spirit of your spouse. Show kindness in both your attitudes and actions.
- Don't replace your marriage relationship. Your wife or husband should be your best friend. Refuse any relationship outside your marriage that is designed to *replace* the relationship which you have with your mate. When you seek affection from others this can lead to adultery. However, the substitute could even be a

relative, a friend, or a neighbor. Do not seek to make someone else a *substitute* for what you are not getting in your marriage. You will never solve your marriage problems by doing this. You must seek to improve and enhance the relationship in the marriage – not abandon it.

Five Traits of a Healthy and Lasting Marriage

➤ **Ownership:** Taking Responsibility

It's easy to avoid responsibility for our problems by blaming someone else. But in the long-haul, admitting sins and mistakes and owning up to our part of the problem is the single most powerful predictor of turning something bad into something good (Gen. 3:9-13). Couples also need to realize that it's not always *who's* wrong but *what's* wrong that counts if they are going to fix their marriage problems.

➤ **Hope:** Believing that Good Ultimately Triumphs

The foundation of hope is belief. We must believe that a Biblical marriage is possible to achieve by God's transforming grace and power. Hope is part of love and believes that good will ultimately be manifested in the life of a marriage partner and the relationship. Stop hoping and marriage dies (1 Cor. 13:6-7).

➤ **Empathy:** Walking in your Spouse's Shoes

A spouse must be aware of what their spouse is feeling and what's behind that feeling (1 Pet. 3:7). Empathy involves both the head (thinking right) and the heart (expressing our emotions). Many of us do one or the other pretty well; we either feel our partner's pain with our heart, or we try to solve their problem with our head. To do both can be a challenge. But this is what empathy is all about – using both our head and heart in dealing with one another in the marriage.

➤ **Forgiveness:** Healing the Wounds

In a good marriage, both husbands and wives are quick to ask for forgiveness and to grant forgiveness (Eph. 4:32). The simple words, "I was wrong. Will you please forgive me?" are magical in any

marriage! Forgiveness was designed to heal the deepest wounds of a human heart.

➤ **Commitment:** Loving for Life

No matter how long a couple has been married, commitment may be the most effective tool good marriages use in battling conflicts and bad things that might occur in the marriage (Gen. 2:24). Without commitment and trust, marriages will not thrive or last. In the face of difficulty, the key is to stay committed to your spouse and work together. Sit down with your spouse and discuss how you are doing in each of the categories stated above.

Steps to Take Before Marriage

1. Change 'me' to 'we'.

There's no place for selfishness in a marriage, so you should start changing your mindset from 'me' to 'we'. So, put aside some of that ego and self-centeredness!

2. Learn from a role model couple.

Do you know couples that set a great example of lasting marriage and long-term commitment? If yes, then learn from them.

3. Attend premarital sessions.

Whether you're in the dark about marriage or feel like you can wing it once you're in it, there's no harm in getting more knowledge from premarital classes the focus on the truth of a Biblical marriage.

4. Start adjusting and planning your finances.

There will be a shifting from handling your finances as a single to managing household finances together and sharing your wealth with your spouse.

5. Talk about children

You surely know how some people start asking when you are going to have a baby. It's good to have a discussion with your fiancé regarding this. It will be easier for you to decide when and how the family expansion will happen with no external pressure during the marriage.

6. Practice forgiveness.

Forgiveness is one of the keys of a successful marriage, so you should be prepared for this. Holding a grudge against your spouse will only harm your relationship and create a negative climate in your home. Learn how to forgive and see the silver lining in the hardships you might encounter. That way, you can learn from each other and grow together without being divided by bitterness and resentment.

7. Keep an open mind and be flexible.

You might have some expectations about married life but remember that you shouldn't expect everything to be perfect in a marriage. There are going to be ups and downs, and you need to be ready for it. Have faith in your future spouse and your relationship and don't be surprised when you are faced with some conflicts which you need to work through. When there are differences, work through them.

9. Build your friendship and learn to laugh it off.

The best way to experience a great marriage is by having your best friend as a spouse. See him not only as your lover or leader but also someone you can talk to about anything, someone you can share your passions with and confide in, even someone you can be yourself around. Just as friends do, learn to create a positive atmosphere around each other and at one point try to laugh at some of your differences rather than always handling them in a too serious manner. Don't walk on eggshells. Live, laugh, and love!

Premarital Questions Before I Say I Do

1. What do you appreciate most about your partner?
2. What do you value about your relationship?
3. Describe what commitment means to you as you make plans to walk down the aisle?

4. Are you on the same page about children? How many children do you want to have? Are you going to just wait and see and consider it later in the marriage?
5. How should you relate to your families after you are married?
6. What are your feelings about having or managing debt?
7. How should you manage your money and household finances (joint or separate)?
8. How do you feel about saving money?
9. How do you feel about spending money? How compatible are your spending habits? Are you a spendthrift?
10. Should you put in place prenuptial agreements before marriage?
11. How will you raise or educate your children?
12. How important is the physical relationship in the marriage and what is the purpose for it?
13. Do you have any fears related to physical intimacy?
14. Can you work out an agreement about how to deal with differences in the frequency of sexual desire?
15. What is your opinion on birth control?
16. How do you express love and affection in the marriage relationship on a daily basis?
17. What does the Bible say the wife's responsibility is in the home?
18. What are the man's responsibilities?
19. How do you deal with disagreements and resolve conflicts?
20. Who has the final say in the home?
21. What does submission mean in marriage?
22. Can a husband submit to his wife? In what way?
23. What are the boundaries regarding relationships outside of the marriage such as friendships or co-worker relationships?
24. What do you think is the most difficult thing about marriage?
25. What makes you compatible for marriage?
26. Why is marriage important to you?
27. Does God ever condone divorce?
28. What are the four most important aspects of marriage?
(Love, Communication, Adjustment, Forgiveness)
29. What does marriage and commitment mean to you?
30. How do you keep yourself from infidelity or unfaithfulness?
31. Do you have bad memories from your childhood that still affect you? Are you living in the past?
32. How do you feel about church attendance? Are you willing to use your gifts for the Lord.
33. What do you expect from each other?
34. What type of support do you expect from your husband or wife in the marriage? (personally, financially, and emotionally)
35. How can the husband include his spouse in making important or personal decisions?

36. What are your individual core values? How do your partner's core values align with yours?
37. Are you a communicator or a silent sufferer?
38. How do you define a happy, loving, and fulfilling marriage?
39. Who are your positive relationship role models for marriage?
40. What does Joshua 24:15 say about home life?

Personality & Spiritual Test (Who You Are & Where You Need to Change)

1 = "That is definitely NOT me!" 2 = "That is usually NOT me." 3 = "That is usually me." 4 = "That is mostly me."

SECTION 1

__ emotional__ egotistical__ interrupts others__ compassionate__ impulsive
 __ disorganized__ impractical__ funny__ forgetful__ easily discouraged
 __ very positive__ easily angered__ undisciplined__ extrovert (outgoing)
 __ Introvert (shy)__ refreshing__ lively/spirited__ weak-willed__ spontaneous
 __ talkative__ delightful/cheerful__ enjoyable__ popular__ friendly/sociable
 __ restless__ difficulty concentrating__ likes hobbies__ committed__ lives in the present (not the past)__ difficulty with appointments (being on time)

SECTION 2

__ optimistic__ determined__ bossy__ goal-oriented__ decisive__ boldness
 __ confident__ workaholic__ self-sufficient__ practical
 __ headstrong (cocky attitude)__ outgoing__ domineering__ adventurous
 __ aggressive__ competitive__ leadership ability__ daring__ persevering
 __ bold__ strong-willed__ persuasive__ mild or hot-tempered
 __ resourceful (thrifty)__ sensitive vs. unsympathetic__ outspoken__ productive

SECTION 3

__ deep feeling__ critical__ insecure__ sensitive__ indecisive__ hard to please
 __ self-centered__ pessimistic__ depressed easily__ easily offended
 __ loner__ self-sacrificing__ faithful friend__ analytical__ considerate
 __ likes behind the scenes__ suspicious__ respectful__ planner__ perfectionist
 __ planner__ unforgiving/resents__ orderly__ creative__ detailed__ moody
 __ gifted (musically or otherwise)

SECTION 4

very quiet selfish unenthusiastic negative regular daily habits
 hesitant shy stingy aimless not aggressive stubborn worrier
 spectator or participant (go getter) in life works well under pressure
 indecisive adaptable slow and lazy submissive to others easy going
 reserved calm and cool content/satisfied efficient patient
 dependable listener pleasant making light of others consistent

Some Final Thoughts On Marriage

- ✓ Be a good listener (James 1:19)
- ✓ Agree to disagree over trivial things (Rom. 14)
- ✓ Communicate with one another regularly (Col. 4:6)
- ✓ Always forgive each other (Matt. 18:21-22)
- ✓ Accept one another (we all have imperfections – Rom. 15:7)
- ✓ Take responsibility (James 1:13-14)
- ✓ Never take one another for granted (Matt. 13:46)
- ✓ Have a date night (Song of Solomon 2):
- ✓ Keep intimacy alive (Song of Solomon 1)
- ✓ Complement one another (Song of Solomon 1:8-17).
- ✓ Do not live in a fantasy land (marriages take work – 2 Tim. 1:7)
- ✓ Do not become a control freak (1 Pet. 5:3; 3 John 9)
- ✓ Pray with each other (1 Pet. 3:7)
- ✓ Offer grace or kindness to each other (Col. 4:6)
- ✓ Express patience toward each other (James 1:4)
- ✓ Respect each other (in private and in public – Eph. 5:33; 1 Pet. 3:7; Eph. 5:25; Lev. 10:16; Prov. 18:8; 26:20)
- ✓ Encourage and edify each other (1 Thess. 5:11; Rom. 14:19)
- ✓

Biblical Evaluation for a Marriage Relationship

(A Post-Marital Check-Up Test)

Checklist for Husbands

Husbands, now that you have read what the Bible teaches about your role and responsibilities in marriage, take a few moments to evaluate yourself.

Rate yourself by circling the appropriate number: 5=excellent, 4=very good; 3=good; 2=poor, 1=failing.

- 12345 - I see myself as having left father and mother and as bonded to my wife.
- 12345 - I am committed to making our marriage last until one of us dies.
- 12345 - I provide my wife the kind of loving leadership Christ gives the church.
- 12345 - I often sacrifice my interests for my wife's well-being.
- 12345 - I often tell her that I love her and do little things to show it.
- 12345 - I am concerned about her feelings, and I listen when she talks about them.
- 12345 - I try to say something nice to my wife every day and don't go to sleep angry.
- 12345 - I do not use my wife's shortcomings as excuses for my own failures.
- 12345 - I talk about spiritual matters with her, and I often pray for her, and with her.
- 12345 - I often spend quality time with her and show much interest in her.
- 12345 - I arrange my schedule to spend time with my wife.
- 12345 - I am not selfish and love to please my wife in every day living.
- 12345 - I have been practicing the characteristics of love toward my wife as mentioned in 1 Corinthians 13.
- 12345 - I have been practicing the fruit of the Spirit in my relationship with my wife.

Checklist for Wives

Wives, now that you have read what the Bible teaches about your role and responsibilities in marriage, you might want to stop and evaluate how you are doing. Rate yourself by circling the appropriate number: 5=excellent, 4=very good; 3=good; 2=poor, 1=failing.

12345 - I do not let myself think that I have married the wrong person.

12345 - I have left my father and mother and have bonded with my husband.

12345 - I am committed to making our marriage last until one of us dies.

12345 - I do not use sexual fulfillment as a weapon to get my own way.

12345 - I am willing to submit to my husband's headship as ordained by God.

12345 - I show respect for my husband in my attitudes and my actions.

12345 - I do little things for him that I know will please him.

12345 - I don't use my husband's shortcomings as an excuse for my failures.

12345 - I see myself as my husband's spiritual companion, and I pray for him, and with him.

12345 - I do not nag my husband trying to cause bitterness to swell up within him.

12345 - I arrange my schedule to spend time with my husband.

12345 - I am not selfish and love to please my husband in everyday living.

12345 - I have been practicing the characteristics of love toward my husband, as mentioned in 1 Corinthians 13.

12345 - I have been practicing the fruit of the Spirit in my relationship with my husband.

Marriage Counsel Questions

- ✓ What is your desire for your marriage? Do you really want your marriage to succeed and become a Biblical marriage that honors God?
- ✓ How much are you willing to change to keep your relationship alive?
- ✓ Do you believe that Christ, His Word, and the transforming work of grace can resolve your conflicts?
- ✓ Where do you see ways in which you need to grow in loving your wife and living sacrificially towards her?
- ✓ How would you describe your life together?
- ✓ How would you describe your relationship in one sentence?
- ✓ What are you willing to do to improve your relationship?
- ✓ What's standing in the way of your relationship being as good as you want it to be?
- ✓ Do you fight and have disagreements often? If so, what are the common topics?
- ✓ What are the things you love about your partner?
- ✓ Which aspects of your relationship do you wish were different? Are these wishes realistic?
- ✓ What can you do to improve your relationship?

- ✓ Are there any past conflicts that still need to be resolved?
- ✓ What do you see as the general problem(s) in the marriage right now? Give me a problem list.
- ✓ Where do you see your sin contributing to the problems in the marriage? This is a chance to take ownership of your sins.

Someone said:

“Success in marriage is more than finding the right person; it is a matter of being the right person.”

Remember: Marriage is not merely a feeling but a commitment before God and your spouse. “It is for better or for worse, in sickness and in health.” Marriage is for life. Stay good on this commitment (Romans 7:2).

Making lists (specific demands) and checking them off is not necessarily the answer to resolving conflicts. Lists in themselves may not be a bad thing but more than lists we need love – a Biblical love in action! We also live for Christ and rely on His power on a daily basis for transformation (Gal. 2:20) – not a checklist.

- Be able to see the good in your partner without possessing harsh judgment or having too many expectations for him or her to fulfill at once. This can become a burden.
- Develop a new sense of unconditional love for your partner, a love that comes from a deep part of your heart and soul.
- Get to know and understand your partner at a deeper level than ever before.
- Give time for each other to grow and prove themselves in your newfound commitment to character development and growth.