

Relationships - Dating - Marriage

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Relationships, Dating and Marriage.

Introduction

The Word of God has much to say about the subject of Relationships, Dating, and Marriage. For starters, it is interesting to note that God the Holy Spirit chose the apostle Paul, who was a bachelor, to be the greatest expert on marriage in all of human history. Since Paul received his knowledge through Divine revelation and not human experience, he is automatically a proficient authority on the subject. Experienced lovers are terrible lovers and the Bible even teaches that experience in "love" usually connotes failure and no capacity. Many born again believers today make a terrible mistake in their choice of a lifetime partner because they have not learned the principles of Bible doctrine relating to marriage. Sometimes a marriage may start out as a good marriage, but that marriage breaks down because of failure in the spiritual life. Once that failure occurs, it's all over even though they may stay together.

One of the major problems in marriage is the fact that people expect more from it than what God designed it for. There are a lot of cornball views in the world today regarding relationships that are diametrically opposed to the Christian way of life. One view that many individuals have is that marriage is the ultimate in happiness. Another worldly view is to marry for money and sadly, some women are just looking for a meal ticket or a sugar daddy; anything that will give them a lifelong opportunity to be lazy. Likewise, there are even men who marry women for their money. So let me give you an application here: If you are a woman with money, never marry a man who doesn't have money unless you have consulted a lawyer and prepared a prenuptial contract so that your money is always protected. Remember that just because a person is a nice Christian with a sweet face who utters a lot of platitudes and shows you a notebook full of doctrinal teaching, do not assume that he is not after your money - or something else. Instead, take a good look at the situation and make sure that nothing is going to interfere with your relationship with God.

This book was not written to condemn you or to make you feel guilty about yourself or your situation; rather, it was written to help you. Your marriage, your relationships, and your dating choices are between you and the Lord. Whatever your status may be- married and divorced, divorced and re-married, single and hoping, and even single and lusting-whatever it is, it is between you and the Lord.

Before we begin, we must first understand some principles:

1. If you are trying to solve your problems in dating, relationships and marriage without Bible doctrine, your efforts are fruitless because there is no solution to your problem, no matter how sincere you are or how hard you try.
2. Any relationship based solely upon emotion is self-destructive and doomed to failure.
3. If you are a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, there is absolutely no place for worldly counsel and human viewpoint in your marriage. This is one of the prevalent problems in Christian relationships today. The origin of the Divine institution of marriage is God, not psychology.
4. Bible doctrine must be accompanied by virtue-love in the application of the doctrinal principles that you have learned.
5. Bible doctrine is always right. No matter what you think, feel, see or believe, if it contradicts doctrine – it is wrong, period!
6. The ultimate in happiness is fulfilling the Pre-designed Plan of God for your life. **“Let the husband fulfill his duty to his wife, and likewise also the wife to her husband.” (1Co 7:3)**

1 Relationships

No believer can have a successful relationship with someone of the opposite sex apart from a right relationship with God. For example, you see people start out being gung-ho for doctrine and then, very shortly after, they get involved with a member of the opposite sex and they begin to disappear from Bible class. As a result, God and doctrine have become second, third, or even fourth on their scale of values. Therefore, believers should not set out on a big search for romance because that is when problems and difficulties arise. Instead, they should be patient, trusting in the Lord for guidance. So, take it by faith that if God has someone for you, He will bring the two of you together. When a believer waits for the one that God has designed for his or her life, the compatibility and rapport will have been perfectly tailored. As the original Hebrew of **Jer 31:22** puts it, **“the female shall fit the hero.”**

The Three Stages in a Man-Woman Relationship

In the man-woman relationship there are three stages: attraction, compatibility and rapport. The first stage is attraction, which generally begins with an interest in the outward appearance. Moreover, it has to do with the superficialities of life, including physical appearance, personality, manners and all of the things that one can know about a person from the outward appearance. This stage poses the greatest dangers because you assume that what you see is what you get, and that is seldom true in relationships. During the courtship, humans seem to be masters at hiding what they're really like. Therefore, attraction is the blind stage of romance. It is at this point in the relationship that a person often sets aside or ignores what is distracting or unappealing in the object of their romance. In other words, they are blinded and don't see the real person. Instead, they see a handsome man or a beautiful woman on their arm and that is all they care about; they are unaware of the real person underneath the beauty.

While there is nothing wrong with charm and beauty, if that is all there is on which to base a relationship, then the relationship is ultimately doomed to failure. You must remember that beauty and attractiveness are not permanent; the only permanent thing we have in this life is truth from Bible doctrine - God is permanent and doctrine is permanent. Additionally, the attraction stage is a dangerous time because sexual desire runs high and many couples mistake it for true love. Having a sexual desire for someone is one of the most idiotic reasons in the world to get married. That is not the meaning of the phrase in 1Co 7:9 which says, **“it's better to marry than to burn.”** A marriage has very little chance of success when people get married in the attraction stage. The couple can beat the odds if they grow up spiritually, but it will be very difficult, and it is not the norm. The weak person who enters into premarital sex during the attraction stage destroys the norms and standards of doctrine. In doing so, these people lock themselves into the attraction stage for life, never growing up and becoming all that God intended. Consequently, they never get out of the attraction stage as far as a relationship is concerned; their heads are on a swivel, looking at every attractive member of the opposite sex that walks past.¹

¹ For a closer look at the deception of the attraction stage, refer to the book *The Eight Experiments of Man: A Commentary on the Book of Ecclesiastes* by Robert R. McLaughlin, 2007.

The second stage in the man-woman relationship is compatibility. While attraction is the

blind stage of romance, compatibility is the enlightened stage, or the problem-solving stage of romance. In compatibility it might be said, "Once I was blind, but now I see." Reaching this stage means that the couple has learned each other's strengths and weaknesses, and they have figured out how to solve many of their problems on their own. Whatever the problem, they have learned to adapt, and to apply the problem-solving devices. Maybe the problem is terrible anger, a flirtatious nature, or perhaps he is a slob, or she is a grouch in the morning. Whatever the problem is, they have overcome it and made the marriage work. In this stage of the romance, whatever the sins, whatever the failures, whatever the weaknesses of the other, they do not in any way diminish the love they have for each other. Now that's compatibility! Marriage has a better chance of success in the compatibility stage because those involved have used the privacy of their own priesthood to solve the problems that inevitably arise. Here is an outline, or a compatibility checklist, for those who have not yet entered marriage, but are considering it (we are talking about believers here):

1. **Spiritual Compatibility** - this is the most difficult of all the compatibilities to recognize because people can talk one way yet live another. It's vital to be in love with a person who has eternal life, and who understands the basic doctrines of the Christian faith. The couple should have the same mental attitude toward God, Bible doctrine and the Christian way of life. So ask yourself, are you going in the same direction spiritually? Do you both understand the Pre-designed Plan of God? What is your local church preference? All of these are questions that must be addressed.
2. **Soul Compatibility** - this includes priorities in life. Mental attitude is very important. Does he or she seem to complain a lot? No one wants to spend a lifetime with a complainer or a whiner. Men, take note if she is already bossing you around, that is not a good sign.
3. **Physical Compatibility** - there should be some measure of physical attraction such as appearance, grooming, dress, etc. Also, the couple must figure out if they are sexually compatible without engaging in sex.
4. **Economic Compatibility** - this is an understanding between the couple as to who will take care of the finances. Additionally, there should be an understanding as to what happens to the assets that each brought into the marriage.
5. **Family Compatibility** - do both individuals desire to have children? The idea that children are going to bless a marriage is ridiculous. There is no evidence that the Scriptures command having children as a part of the Christian way of life. There should be an agreement as to how many children the couple desires to have, if any at all. And if they decide to have children, there must also be agreement as to the training of the children.
6. **Recreational Compatibility** - it is always nice to have the same interests in this area, but it is not essential.
7. **Compatibility of Opposites** - there is an exception to these principles; if exact opposites happen to be attracted to each other in a soul-love, and they are virtuous and positive toward God's plan, then they can unite and make the relationship fantastic.

The third and final stage in the man-woman relationship is rapport, which is the harmonious stage of romance and marriage. This is where the application of Bible doctrine pays fantastic dividends. Rapport isn't built on agreement, and it isn't built on attraction; rather, it is constructed on virtue. In the rapport stage, couples have the ability to communicate with one another because they are friends, maybe even best friends. Thus, rapport is the fusion of two people with an

understanding of the feelings, thoughts and attitudes of the other. Moreover, it is the actual fulfillment of the divine commands of marriage as found in the books of Colossians and Ephesians:

Wives, be subject to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives, and do not be embittered against them. (Col 3:18-19)

Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church. (Eph 5:22-23)

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her. (Eph 5:25)

What to Look for in a Mate – The Men

Remember men, the right woman is a gift of grace from the Lord Jesus Christ and was made especially for you. With that in mind, let's look at some of the things that you should consider. There are certain things that your woman will have for you, and no one else. For instance, you could be broke and have everything go wrong, but the right woman in your life will produce ultimate prosperity. That is why the greatest prosperity a man can have in this life is finding the right woman. The book of Proverbs is a wonderful guide for the young man who is thinking about getting married. We're going to review a few of the principles found in Chapter 31 where Bathsheba gave advice to her son, Solomon, who was about to become the king of Israel. His mother was giving him some great advice because she foresaw two great dangers to his rule, drinking and the ladies. Bathsheba was a great mother who was trying to influence her son with the truth of doctrine. While she did all that she could to point him to the correct woman for his life, she didn't try to fix him up with anyone, but rather taught him some very important principles: **“An excellent wife, [or a woman with virtue] who can find? For her worth is far above jewels” (Pro 31:10).**

The word for "excellent" is derived from the Hebrew word "chayil" which means virtue or integrity; here it refers to capacity. Bathsheba was telling Solomon that there was a woman of capacity designed especially for him. This woman would be a gift of grace with the capacity to love him, and to put up with him. Since Solomon came to the throne as a bachelor, it was imperative that he find the woman that God had intended for him. In order to help him, God sent a virtuous woman, Bathsheba, to guide him, but he didn't listen. Although Solomon knew this principle, he didn't obey it. So, our passage reads, **“Who can find a virtuous woman [or a woman with capacity]?”** What does this mean? Capacity is:

1. Her ability to receive the man.
2. Her ability to complement the man.
3. Her ability to accommodate the man.
4. Her ability to fulfill the man.
5. Her ability to satisfy the man.

And not anyone else!

The Hebrew word for "find" is "matsa" meaning to discover, to find, or to acquire. The

Hebrew word for "pearls" is "paniy" referring to round, smooth pearls. Therefore, the right woman is like a pearl that comes out of water, and is manufactured through suffering. Any woman with virtue will tell you that she had to go through a certain amount of undeserved suffering before she ever became virtuous.

Men, be wary of the possessive woman, because once you let her put a choke chain on you, you're lost. Women, if you have impersonal unconditional love, you'll never feel threatened by, or jealous of your man's friends, and this includes his female friends. It is this type of love that protects each individual from being jealous, bitter or unfaithful. Some women are so jealous they cannot stand to even see their man talking to another woman. However, if you have impersonal unconditional love, you will be able to handle the situation magnificently with calmness and peacefulness of soul; you'll have confidence and you won't think evil: **"To the pure, all things are pure; but to those who are defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure, but both their mind and their conscience are defiled"** (Tit 1:15).

What to Look for in a Mate – The Women

Ladies, you should pray to find someone who will give you impersonal love rather than roses or Valentine's candy. Women ought to be looking for virtue instead of beauty, handsomeness, and all the other nonsense, because it is virtue that's important; it is a man's principles that determine what he is really all about. If he does not respect your volition, he is the wrong man for you, no matter how good looking he is. Moreover, a male with virtue will never take a female past her own volition in the sphere of intimacy. Additionally, the right man will fulfill the standards that you have established to guide your life, and he will provide your soul with stimulation, and give reality to your dreams as well. The right man will be in the soul of the woman before she ever surrenders her body to him. Once in her soul, he never leaves; there is no way to get him out. Now, she is protected by the love and respect she has for her man. Once a woman has the man that God has designed for her, she will never be satisfied with another; that isn't to say that she won't be unfaithful, because she just might be. However, even if she is unfaithful, she will never be satisfied with anyone else.

Nevertheless, identifying the right man for your life is not always easy to do. Here is some sound advice for you ladies that might find yourselves in a courtship or dating situation. Watch how he treats the unlovely, and the obnoxious people that he comes across. In doing so, you will get an idea of what he is really like. In the first stages of romance, many females tend to idolize the male and overlook the flaws that are obvious to everyone else. So keep your eyes wide open, and remain objective, make your decisions based on doctrine, not on attractiveness.

One aspect to beware of is the possessive man who is looking to control your life and take away your privacy. This is the man who sticks his nose into all of your business and has to know where you are every hour of the day. As such, this type of man will drive you crazy until you become bored, turned off and disenchanted. There are certain males who just never grow up, as is evident by the fact that they pester, and smother their woman until she becomes so annoyed that she tells him to leave. Often this type of man, in his arrogance, then suffers from a wounded ego since he cannot believe he has been turned down. Continuing in his arrogance he says, "I will visit her once more and show her how much class I have. I'll bring her a bottle of the finest wine,

and a candle; I'll toast her and then I'll dump her." This is active arrogance at its worst because he's trying to impress her with an arrogant exhibition; she dropped him, and he's trying to make up for it with a shameful display of what is really in his soul. If he were a man with virtue, he would graciously step aside, and let the lady move on with her life.

Another type of man to avoid is the one who is concerned only with self-gratification. This type is a self-centered, arrogant male, and to him, the partner doesn't make any difference. As a result, he has no ability to ever satisfy a woman outside of a sexual relationship because he has no integrity, honor or virtue. Take note, ladies, no man who puts himself before others can ever fulfill a woman and make a good husband. Therefore, if you ever get involved with a man like this, think long and hard before you marry him; and if you do marry him, expect problems. Should that happen, the best thing you can do is to get yourself to Bible class and stay there until God is so important to you that it doesn't matter what goes on in your life. You will then have the peace of the Lord indwelling your soul. This inner peace is described by Solomon, and it offers ladies a glimpse of what life is like when they have found their right man.

Put me like a seal over your heart, like a seal on your arm. For love is as strong as death, jealousy is as severe as Sheol; its flashes are flashes of fire, the very flame of the Lord. Many waters cannot quench love, nor will rivers overflow it; if a man were to give all the riches of his house for love, it would be utterly despised. (SOS 8:6-7)

This passage teaches the identification between the man and the woman. The Song of Solomon is a book where God used a virtuous woman to reveal to Solomon what he could have had if he had heeded the wisdom of his mother, Bathsheba. The woman in the passage was very beautiful not only physically, but also where it counts, inside of her soul. Although Solomon did all that he could to get this woman to respond to him, she refused, and he became very frustrated. Notice that he could not conquer this woman because she was protected by the love she had for the man in her soul, who was not Solomon! Let's take a closer look at this passage:

Put me like a seal over your heart, like a seal on your arm. For love is as strong as death, jealousy is as severe as Sheol; its flashes are flashes of fire, the very flame of the Lord. (SOS 8:6)

The word Hebrew word for put means to impress or to set, the word for seal signifies that she belongs to a certain man and she is waiting for that man. The phrase "Love is as strong as death" indicates that this woman didn't try to impress other men; she was saving herself for her lover. Therefore, she was not flirtatious, and she was not a tease; she was a woman with virtue. This illustrates that the man's love for the woman and her response to that love serve as a fortification and protection for the woman's soul and body. The phrase "jealousy is as severe as Sheol" describes jealousy as the great enemy of love. Just as the grave robs you of a loved one, so also jealousy robs you of the capacity to love another in a relationship. The phrase "its flashes are flashes of fire" portrays flashes as a reference to love; flashes represent the passion of this woman's responses to her lover. This illustrates that she is first aroused in her soul, and that carries over into her whole being, where she sparkles and glows when around him. Therefore, the right man for your life will affect even your countenance. Continuing, she says these flashes are "the very flame of the Lord." Please note that the flame is from the Lord, not the flesh:

Many waters cannot quench love, nor will rivers overflow it; if a man were to give all the riches of his house for love, it would be utterly despised. (SOS 8:7)

The phrase “Many waters cannot quench love” simply refers to pressures, disasters, difficulties, and misunderstandings that occur in relationships. She is stating that regardless of the circumstances of life, this is a fire or a love that cannot be put out.

“Nor will rivers overflow it” refers to the fact that the most horrible disasters of life cannot destroy this type of love.

“If a man were to give all the riches of his house for love, it would be utterly despised” states that this love cannot be bought. Hence, you cannot buy the one that God has designed for your life; it is a gift.

Conclusively, finding the right person for your life, that is the one that God has designed for you, will produce the greatest blessing. Therefore, the highest degree of happiness and prosperity that a woman can give to the man happens when she behaves as the woman described in this verse.

Prerequisites Ladies Should Consider Before Marriage

1. Develop a soul structure. This inner structure is built through the daily intake of Bible doctrine. The doctrine in your soul serves as an alert system to warn you when something is wrong, as well as a transmitter to allow you to send out the proper signals. Therefore, the most accurate way for a lady to recognize the one that God has for her is through spiritual growth. As a result, few mistakes are ever made when a woman has the stability and inner beauty that comes from doctrine in the soul.
2. Do not enter into a relationship with, or ever marry a man that you do not respect, especially if he is less intelligent than you in the natural realm; there should be compatibility between mentalities and volitions.
3. Do not get involved with a man who has negative volition toward doctrine, especially if you are positive; he will only be a distraction and will eventually bring you down.
4. Do not get involved with a man who has a dependency on something. Do not marry an alcoholic, a drug addict, a compulsive gambler, a neurotic, or psychotic person. Such a man will do anything to fill the hole in his soul, and a person in this condition is in a prison; they're trapped and there is no way out except through Bible doctrine. So protect your soul and your body.
5. Do not conduct the big search. In God's timing, He will bring you to your right man. Remember that God brought the woman to Adam, so if the proper one does not come along, just relax and have a love affair with doctrine. While this does not rule out dating, beware because you could be dating someone that God has designed for someone else.
6. Look at the whole situation from the standpoint of grace orientation. Realize that you do not earn or deserve whomever the Lord will give you, and that their love will be greater than you ever imagined.
7. Prayer is a great asset for guidance and direction.

Finally, here are some questions that ladies should ask themselves before they marry:

1. Will I last long enough in this marriage to find out what he's really like?
2. Does he demonstrate impersonal love for everybody?
3. Does he act like a true Christian man?
4. Is he thoughtful, courteous and gentle?
5. What is his attitude toward life in general and toward people in general?
6. Am I willing to accept the authority of this man for the rest of my life?

Please note: The woman is not capable of answering these questions and making proper decisions in the attraction stage of romance. It is not until she has entered the compatibility or rapport stage of romance that she can be honest with herself, and objective about marriage.

What to Avoid in Picking a Mate- For Men and Women

Let's begin by looking at some of the considerations that people should make when contemplating the selection of a mate. Some of this might be repetitive, but repetition is good for your soul:

1. A believer should not marry an unbeliever. However, it does happen, and when it does it is just like any other sin that people commit; it can be forgiven, but it does have consequences. If you are thinking about marrying an unbeliever, you are creating for yourself a tremendous amount of trouble, and great strife:

Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers, for what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness, or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever? (2Co 6:14-15)

Belial is another name for the devil and it means worthlessness. In other words, what has a believer in common with an unbeliever who is as good as useless?

2. Never get involved with a neurotic person. Whether male or female, a neurotic person is not a good candidate for a partner because they are too hysterical, too emotional, too unstable, too self-centered, and too self destructive to adjust to marriage.
3. Do not approach marriage as the solution to the problems of life. Marriage is not a problem-solving device; rather, it is a problem-manufacturing device!
4. Do not marry in the state of attraction. Instead, wait and make sure you know that your intended is right for you. In other words, make sure that you are compatible, and this can only be done if you have enough doctrine in your soul.
5. Do not marry to escape an unhappy home life, because marriage is not a means of escape. If you must escape an unlivable situation, get out of the house, but do not get married.
6. Do not marry a status symbol. Without compatibility, status symbols are usually more trouble than they are worth; the more status, the more trouble.
7. Do not marry for money or financial security.
8. Do not marry a person for their beauty or attractiveness, because physical beauty offers little indication of the true character of a person. Instead it can blind the ignorant, the

shallow, the superficial and the non-discerning. Unfortunately that seems to describe most of the people getting married today. Remember the age-old truth - beauty fades!

9. Avoid getting married because you feel peer pressure. Do not succumb to the attitude that says, "All of my friends are getting married and so I'd better get married, too." Often, because of peer pressure, people enter into marriage without understanding what it's all about.
10. Never marry someone because you feel sorry for them; they will use it to manipulate you for as long as they can. If you are going into the relationship with the idea that you can change or improve the other person, think again, because it seldom works.
11. No one who is bitter should ever get married while in a state of bitterness. When people enter marriage while in a state of bitterness, it is a sure recipe for the destruction of the marriage. So if you are dating a bitter person, it doesn't matter how attractive they may be- do not marry them.
12. Ladies, this one is especially for you: never marry a man that you do not respect. It does not matter if you love him; respect is what is needed first, not love; and if you are attracted to him and respect him, love will surely follow. When the right man comes along, don't worry - you'll love him.

While these are some principles to be aware of before you enter into a marriage, refer to the book of Proverbs where you'll find these as well as many other passages that contain valuable lessons for young men and women.

2 Marriage

Marriage is one of the Divine Institutions designed by God to protect the freedom of believers and unbelievers alike. It is through marriage and the family that God chose to perpetuate the human race. Outside of salvation, the ultimate in human prosperity is a man and a woman brought together by God.

"Enjoy life with the woman whom you love all the days of your fleeting life which He has given to you under the sun; for this is your reward in life and in your toil in which you have labored under the sun." (Ecc 9:9)

Since God is the designer and originator of marriage, it is perfect in its design; however, it involves imperfect people, and that is where problems come in. For this reason, God, in His grace and wisdom, has provided for our imperfections and failures in marriage. As a result, there are solutions if we follow the principles that He has decreed. Therefore, it is wise to remember this guiding principle: marriage is a learning process!

Before we go further, we should note that while there are some who have the gift of celibacy, they are relatively few in number. However, it's a wonderful gift, and we need to have certain people who are endowed with it. For one thing, it affords undistracted devotion to the Lord. Nevertheless, apart from the gift of celibacy, everyone anticipates getting into marriage at some time or another.

As we previously noted, marriage for the Christian is not only difficult and challenging, but it is also the place of more failures than any other in the spiritual life. Moreover, the believer often fails in marriage and relationships with the opposite sex because of failure in his or her own spiritual life. The reason for this is that many married believers either lack, or refuse to use, the Bible doctrine that God has provided for use in this area. Since proper use of doctrine gives Christians the means to face anything in life and especially the problems that arise in marriage, knowledge related to the divine rules for matrimony is imperative. Marriage, by its very nature, puts two people, a man and a woman, in confined living quarters, and this is one of the reasons that problems exist. The seed of marriage is usually planted when there is a total attraction between two people, but as the attraction subsides, and the novelty of wedlock fades, the couple begins to learn what the other is really all about. When this happens what was once hidden by attractiveness, and desire begins to appear. The real person emerges, and it is living with the real person on a day-by-day basis that is the greatest challenge that a husband and wife can endure. Therefore, if a marriage is going to continue, or a relationship turn out right, there must be an understanding of the principles of Bible doctrine. You cannot build a marriage on philosophical writings, or on love and attraction. In fact, for any relationship in life to be successful, it must be founded upon principle; and I am talking about any type of relationship that exists in life, not just marriage. So, whether it is a business relationship, a parent-child relationship, or friendship, it must be based on principles in order to be successful.

Here is an interesting thing to consider: in most relationships there is time off, but there is no time off from marriage. Once married, you surrender a certain amount of privacy, so it is inevitable that you will come to know well the one to whom you're married. With that being said, the biggest challenge in marriage is sticking with doctrine. Therefore, each partner should be careful to maintain a degree of privacy and continue to learn Bible doctrine. Will you forget every doctrine that you have ever learned, or will you go forward in the plan of God?

For our purposes, there are four different classifications of marriage:

1. Marriage of two unbelievers. This relationship is governed by the laws of divine establishment¹, which means that it can be successful. For two unbelievers, the solution to having a happy marriage is found in **Ecc 9:9** which states, **“Enjoy life with the woman whom you love all the days of your fleeting life which He has given to you under the sun; for this is your reward in life.”** We'll discuss this further at the end of this chapter.
2. Marriage of a believer with an unbeliever, which will be discussed in an upcoming section.
3. Marriage between two believers with positive volition toward Doctrine. A couple that is positive toward the plan of God should be able to work out their problems through the doctrine resident in their souls.

Marriage of a spouse with positive volition toward doctrine to a spouse with negative volition toward doctrine. This, too, will be further discussed in an upcoming section.

¹ Divine Establishment means that God has ordained certain laws for the survival and freedom of the human race during the course of human history. The laws of divine establishment are designed and directed toward both believer and unbeliever. There are four areas to God's divine establishment, all of which are oriented to a system of authority: 1) volition (authority over one's own soul), 2) marriage (authority of the husband over the wife), 3) family (authority of the parents over the children), 4) nationalism (authority of the government over the citizens).

At this point, I'd like to introduce an excellent book which deals with the subject of marriage called *Husbands and Wives: Exploding Marital Myths/deepening Love and Desire* (1989), by Dr. Melvyn Kinder and Dr. Connell Cowan. While these two men are psychologists who recognize some Biblical principles, they do not reference the Bible or use doctrinal solutions. In the beginning of the book, they announce exactly how the trends of marriage have developed since the 1960s. Below is an extended excerpt from the book:

In the 1960s men and women began to explore a new way of looking at life, of considering their dreams, options and individual potential. This period has consequently been called the "me" generation, an era of narcissism. It was characterized by emphasis on feelings rather than thinking and rationality. Openness, communication and the expression of honest emotions were valued, even cherished as essential prerequisites for developing authentic bonds of intimacy. While this period certainly broke new ground in some daring and exciting ways, it also sowed the seeds for the discontent and disenchantment that many couples now suffer today.

In the 1970s traditional marriage came under siege. It was viewed as overly restrictive to personal growth and especially oppressive to women; and in need of major overhaul. Marriage was no longer seen as a cooperative and collaborative venture; it became merely another vehicle for personal gratification. People began to ask themselves "what am I getting out of marriage?" rather than "what do I bring to marriage?" The notion of "for better or for worse or till death do us part" gave way to "till you no longer meet my needs". No wonder, then, that the divorce rate skyrocketed in the 1970s.

And today, in the 1980s, couples are still struggling to overcome long venerated beliefs and

mythologies that simply do not serve contemporary realities. The marriages of the late 1980s are very different from the marriages of preceding generations. Social changes have influenced husbands and wives in strikingly different ways. Curiously, the net effect of all of these changes is that our expectations are greater than ever while our hopes of fulfillment are smaller than ever. However, couples today are taking a sharp turn back toward traditional values. Unfortunately such attitudes have not yet been translated into behavior. Husbands and wives have not yet figured out how to harness the specific skills that will enrich the marriage. Nevertheless men and women appear to sense more than ever before that the more selfish ways of the past do not bring happiness; instead they invariably create frustration and loneliness.

Myth #1 - Marriage will make you feel complete and whole.

This is the most widely held myth in marriage. No matter how emotionally healthy or how intelligent we are, most of us harbor the secret and largely unconscious fantasy that marriage will make us feel safe, whole, and complete in a way that being single can never do. As we develop from infancy to adulthood, we must learn to separate from our parents and evolve our own distinct and unique identity. Most of us complete this process successfully, and yet there is always some sense of loneliness or lack of completion. As adults, we often yearn for that primitive sense of oneness we felt as infants - that feeling of total safety and security we had before any dawning awareness that life is a solo experience, begun, lived and ended fundamentally alone.

When we search for a life mate, a common secret wish is that together we will be as one. This is the fuel that drives romance and secret longings - the fantasy of fusion. We feel we have a hedge against loneliness and isolation when we are together, and, conversely, when our lover or mate is not with us, we may feel fragmented, less than a whole person. The truth is that as social beings, we all have a hunger for love and human contact - and marriage may go a long way toward satisfying this hunger. However, it cannot satisfy our most primitive longings and fantasies about completion. The expectation that it will is inevitably frustrated. Feelings of warmth, safety, and wholeness - of complete union - can only be attained in a system without conflict or differences. The very moment differences arise, these feelings are threatened - If we don't feel especially close, we feel especially far away.

Marriage is a system that has built-in differences. Wives and husbands who insist they could be as one with their mate if only their mate did this or that are playing out a belief in this myth.

The implicit belief that marriage should make us feel whole leads to a wide range of marital conflicts. If we feel insecure or depressed, for example, we may automatically look to our spouse as the antidote to these negative feelings. Either we want our mate to solve the problem, or we secretly blame him or her for somehow not being enough for us - not loving enough, not rich enough, not sexual enough, not "something" enough.

Myth #2 - Your mate should change for you if he or she really loves you.

As we have noted, in recent years many couples have erroneously assumed that negotiation is a natural and basic part of marriage and that it's important to ask for what you want and need in a relationship. It is common for marriage counselors to start out the first session with a couple by saying to each partner, "tell your spouse what you need from your marriage". This approach implies that change is a result of communication. While communicating your needs may be reasonable as a starting point, it doesn't mean that what you want is something your mate can provide. Yet somehow, we have been brainwashed into thinking that change, even a monumental modification of the marital bond, is entirely possible. The underlying assumption is that if your mate loves you, he or she will make Herculean efforts to twist himself or herself into the exact shape you desire. "I'd always thought of myself as being pretty neat," Josh says, "but neatness took on a whole new definition after Becky and I got married. At first, I tried to keep up with her, but I found I couldn't. No sooner would I put a cigarette out than the ashtray would disappear for cleaning. After dinner I'd say, 'there's a great program I'd like to watch with you - I'll do the dishes afterward'. But no, she'd be in there doing the dishes while I watched the show, feeling guilty. It wasn't that she particularly enjoyed doing dishes; it was just that she couldn't stand knowing they were dirty and sitting there. We used to have these big fights where I'd tell her how compulsive she was and that I was fed up with how guilty she made me feel all the time. I've stopped doing that now. I keep my life as organized and uncluttered as I need and I don't worry that it doesn't match her level of tidiness."

Josh was smart to stop trying to change Becky. She felt vaguely anxious and out of control when her environment was in a state of disarray. In many ways, she disliked her compelling need for organization even more than Josh did; it was exhausting and time-consuming. But like it or not, neatness was a basic and persistent part of her personality style and intimately tied to her being able to feel relaxed and comfortable. Josh's acceptance of that allows them both to feel less guilty and more at ease.

Men and women have been led to believe that change or growth is easier than it really is. The human potential movement urged men and women to change themselves, to actualize themselves, to grow and to evolve. And it apparently followed in the minds of many that if individual growth is good, so too is growth in marriage, and therefore asking a mate to change is good on two counts: It helps the marriage to change positively and it increases the chances of getting what one needs. What is conspicuously missing in all this new thinking is the old concept of "for better or worse" -of accepting a mate's flaws as well as enjoying his or her virtues.

Acceptance does not mean you have to live with conditions in your marriage that you find irritating or even intolerable. But acceptance does mean that your mate must feel confident that you love him or her in spite of any flaws, and that you can distinguish good points from imperfections. Couples sometimes go on trying to change each other long after it is clear that it won't work. What happens is that the one who wants change begins to build a case that gets increasingly extreme and dramatic, even obsessive, as though the validity of the marriage hinged on some specific change. Getting a spouse to change becomes tantamount to getting him or her to love you. You are allowing yourself to be

influenced by this myth - equating change with love - whenever you find yourself being unrelenting in your effort to persuade your spouse to be different. Some of the clues are constant criticism, nagging, and at times uncontrolled irritability when your mate's awful and unwanted behavior manifests itself. Again, love is about acceptance. Your mate can love you and still find it nearly impossible to modify his or her behavior in any lasting and consistent way. No one sets out to annoy or disappoint his or her mate. A spouse may want to change but somehow finds it painfully difficult to do so. The ease or difficulty of responding to your mate's request for change is often totally independent of how much you love your mate. As psychotherapists, we struggle every day trying to help people let go of old behaviors and find the courage to risk new ones.

Myth #3 - If you truly love each other, romance should continue to flourish.

Romantic feelings and love are invariably linked together, and yet they are vastly different psychological states of mind. Romance is characterized by feelings of rare closeness, ecstasy, longing, and idealization. We feel that we and our mate are as one, soul mates. In the beginning stages of any relationship, we all look for that exquisite feeling of excitement and infatuation; that heightened sense of aliveness. But no matter how wonderful we feel, there is still a basic truth lurking in the background; romance is based more on fantasy than on reality. Romance is more about what we project into the situation than about what is actually there. It is based on mystery, fantasy, hopes, and wishes. Our lover's flaws are minimized and his or her virtues are magnified in our eyes. So, as we come to know more about our lover, romance evolves into something more real and substantial, though often less intoxicating. Love, based upon information and experience, takes over where romance leaves off.

While romance often leads to love and marriage, it doesn't automatically follow that love leads to romance. When a man and a woman love each other, the way in which that love is expressed is quite varied. Love is about loyalty, fidelity, and companionship. It is about shared dreams, tenderness, and sexuality. For some couples, an ongoing passion and excitement may also be a part of the story. But for others, romance and passion become rare and fleeting experiences in marriage. In other words, romantic interludes need not be absent from the marriage, but they are not automatic simply because two people love each other.

We do not intend just to offer a sobering message here. There is room in any marriage for romantic moments, gestures, and experiences. Many marriages have woven into their fabric the notion of romance, and this can be true even for couples married many years. It's not the increase of romance that makes a marriage, it is the increase of what we would call...virtue-love.

Myth #4 - Your mate should understand you.

There is one assumption about love that leads to more difficulty in marriage than almost any other, and that is the notion that when someone loves you, he or she will almost intuitively understand you. Remember how in the romantic phase of your relationship

each of you sensed what the other was thinking and feeling? Some couples will say, "We know each other so well we can finish each other's sentences!" There was that feeling of being in tune that felt so wonderful. So, why shouldn't that continue on into marriage? Well, for one reason, as you relax and become accustomed to each other, part of what is so wonderful is that you don't have to attend to each other all the time; there is some lessening of the intensity of the involvement. And with that lessening of being "into" each other comes a more normal state of understanding that is dependent less on intuition and more on directly expressed information.

But as time goes on in a marriage, the partners are often saddened by the decrease in sensitivity and empathy. Couples in therapy frequently accuse each other of expecting the mate to be a "mind reader." "You should have known that would hurt me," they insist. "You knew what you were getting when we got married." "I haven't changed at all-why don't you understand me?"

Such remarks tell us as therapists that spouses are assuming that a mate should have a vivid sense of who they are, what they need, what hurts them and what makes them happy. Unfortunately, that's just not so. How many things do you assume your mate knows about you in an active way? As the years go by, most of us have a growing list of feelings, needs, and concerns that we've long ago stopped putting into words, believing that they are obvious to our mate.

One couple discovered something very interesting. The man had on his list "I assume Linda knows I love her." Linda was pleasantly surprised. "It's been a long time since he's told me he loved me," she said. To which he countered, "I guess I just thought you knew it, since I've been faithful, we have a pretty good sex life, and I keep coming home to you year after year." He believed his actions expressed his love for her. What he didn't realize is that at times we all need to hear words of reassurance to allay our normal doubts and insecurities. Understanding is a result not only of communication but also of a kind of sensitivity and heightened wish to listen well and observe with perceptiveness. But we seldom have that kind of vigilance and observational skill. Often spouses are preoccupied with their own separate concerns and apprehensions.

No matter how much love we may feel for the other, there are so many feelings and wishes that we miss. The wife who is preoccupied with children and juggling her own career may not be so quick to sense her husband has had a tough day, and that is normal. The husband who comes home and greets his wife who has been talking to the schoolteacher about their child's performance may not want to pick up her cues to talk, and instead he turns on the television to watch the news. Are they selfish? Unloving? No, just human. How many times have you said, or heard, "That's not what I meant," countered again by "No I didn't, are you trying to tell me I'm a liar?" countered by "what are you telling me, that I'm deaf?" and so on.

What do we have here, liars and deaf people? Not at all. How we act, what we say, and what we project are not necessarily what our mate receives. We are often rather blind to the exact ways in which we come across. What we feel, how we act, even what we say

are so often filtered, guarded, or lopsided that our mate may have a hard time trying to decipher and be understanding even if he or she is willing to make the necessary effort. The wife who expresses a wish to be heard may be perceived as a complainer rather than as someone who simply wants to be understood more clearly. The husband who wants more support for his financial concerns may be seen as tight and argumentative rather than as someone who is reaching out for help and support.

One reason why mates cannot reflexively and easily understand each other, today especially, is that we are overburdened with myths about the opposite sex that further impair our listening ability. Put bluntly, we are not even sure what it is we are supposed to be listening for! So often, very legitimate pleas are misinterpreted. For example, the wife who wants more time is heard as asking for more romance, and the husband who complains about the kids' behavior may really be asking for more quiet time with his wife. Don't automatically assume anything. Help your mate to understand you, and, above all, give up on any fantasy of an all knowing and intuitive mate. Be clear in expressing what you feel and what you need. Your mate won't necessarily respond with eagerness, but at least you will no longer be relying on clairvoyance and mind reading.

Myth #5 - Differences in need should always be negotiated.

Husbands and wives often fear differences in personality styles and values; they come to believe that similarities and love are the same. The fear of differences exists on all levels of human behavior. Prejudices, for instance, are a result of the fear of differences. It's almost as though differences are threatening just because they sometimes make us feel uncomfortable. If people are different, we're not sure they will understand or appreciate us. If they value something we don't, does it mean they do not value who we are? Of course not. Yet we often act as if it were desperately important to make our mate become more like us.

The need to negotiate is too often motivated by an unconscious fear that differences between husband and wife will result in loneliness and isolation and perhaps lead to an affair, or even divorce. For example, a husband may try desperately, though covertly, to sabotage his wife's involvement in work or a new hobby or friendship because of his fear that she will meet new people, particularly new men, and he may lose her. Does that sound extreme? Yes, but our basic and most primitive fears do drive us to extremes. The belief that relationships should be fine-tuned by a kind of ongoing negotiation is a rather recent phenomenon.

Psychology has placed great emphasis on communication, and it has been assumed that the sole purpose of communication is negotiation, and that negotiation - asking for what you want and giving up only what you have to - is always good. But negotiation is not always good. Far too often it is motivated more by fear and distrust than by love. Couples who fail to accept each other's basic personalities are often caught up in a terrible endless drama of trying to change each other. Rather than love, the commodity of exchange in these scenarios is power - the fear of not having it and the wish to possess it to feel more effective and worthy.

Negotiation is too often a mask for old unresolved anxieties or power struggles between husbands and wives. "Every time I open a can of beer or have a second glass of wine when we're out to dinner I try to prepare myself for that look of hers," Jesse complains of his wife, "but the corker really came the other day when we walked into a small party at a friend's house and were asked if we'd like a drink. Robin said, "nothing for me, thank you - one alcoholic in the family is more than enough."

Robin grew up in the tragic chaos and unpredictability of an alcoholic family structure. Her father was the drinker and her mother inevitably played out the role of the martyr. Robin vowed she would be different and never get caught up in that painful downward spiral. In Robin's mind, anyone who drinks with any regularity is an alcoholic or at least one in the making. She is convinced Jesse is an alcoholic even though he rarely imbibes to excess and does not drink on a nightly basis. She would like him to stop drinking altogether. He finds that totally unacceptable.

Recently, she countered with what she believed to be a reasonable compromise that he would not have any alcohol at home and would restrict his drinking to parties or dinners out. Jesse's response was one of anger and frustration. "I've heard all the horror stories," he says, "but frankly I'm sick to death of her seeing me as a stand-in for her father. Sure, her childhood was awful, but I don't do any of those things. I'm not an alcoholic, and I'm not going to hide the fact that I enjoy an occasional drink just to make her feel more comfortable and in control. I'd be more than willing to talk if I felt I had a problem, but I don't know how you negotiate moderation."

Whenever we work with couples, we are continually surprised to find that different values and ways of being are often complementary: The passive person marries the energetic and dynamic one, and the less responsible individual marries a more stable and conservative one. And then they set out to change each other! The message here is simple: try to remember why you were attracted to your mate in the first place. Remember how at one time you delighted in and treasured some of those differences that you now may find threatening or annoying. Learn to become more accepting and to appreciate the differences between you and your mate. See them as lending variety, texture, and the potential for surprise to your relationship.

Myth #6 - In a good marriage the partners have identical dreams and goals.

Wrong! Partners in a good marriage have commonly shared dreams but not identical ones. The fantasy of fusion runs throughout most marriages, but rather than leading to closeness and intimacy, it causes difficulties. Every husband and wife is a separate and distinct individual, and their different personalities lead to different ways of viewing life. Invariably, couples will have attitudes and ideas about where to live, how children should be raised and where they should go to school, how to save money and plan for their retirement, for instance. In each of these areas, each spouse understandably would like the other to have the same point of view. But it never happens that way. Goals and dreams are different because each husband and wife is a unique and separate person with his or her own ideas about what is worthwhile and what is not.

“We're actually a lot more alike than we are different," Corrine says, "but when it comes to money, we are like night and day. We both have the same overall goal for a secure lifestyle, but I just think he takes it to an extreme. He'll drive around the block ten times looking for a parking space rather than pay for a parking garage, and he throws a fit when I have someone in to clean more than once a month. The fact is, we both work and make good money, and we don't have to pinch pennies. I really had to draw the line for myself the other day when he got annoyed because I took my car to the car wash; he washes his own, of course, and thinks I should too. I ended up blowing up and telling him, "Look, I don't get on your case simply because it's in your nature to be thrifty and want to save money when you can. That's just fine, but we are different, and I don't want to feel guilty or self-indulgent every time I choose to spend money in a little different way. We're not clones and we don't always have to think the same."

In a good marriage, couples should respect and appreciate the differences in their dreams and goals. Ideally these differences can become the substance and text of a lively dialogue between the two people in which both feel they "win" because they are better informed. By dialogue, we mean an exchange of ideas, not a tension-filled negotiation. When love exists, this kind of exchange gradually evolves into a merging or growing unity of vision. But unity is never going to be perfect. There will always be divergent views and rough edges - which, we believe, actually enhance a sense of aliveness in the marriage.

Myth #7 - A marriage must be stable in order to be healthy.

We all desire a certain degree of stability in life; otherwise there would be too much uncertainty and anxiety about the unknown. One of the reasons we get married is to provide a context or structure that feels safe and secure. "I wanted to settle down" is the reason given by many for why they chose to marry.

A marriage for most of us is a kind of refuge from the difficulties of living in a complex and increasingly uncertain society. At the same time, in most marriages there is also a secret fear of stagnation and boredom that lurks just beneath the surface.

We all crave a sense of aliveness and savor significant times of passion and intensity with our mate. What we have are distinctly different needs butting head- on, creating a continual conflict in marriage. Our need for security and stability is at odds with our wish for surprise and the unexpected. For instance, many of us desire a very sensual and erotic mate, but we have trouble reconciling this wish with our tendency to feel jealous. How can this conflict be resolved? Well, it cannot be! But that's not bad news; in fact, it is the opposition of stability and passion that provides the energy driving many very successful marriages.

It's important to understand that the marriage system is dynamic rather than static, which means that there is constant movement and change. As in all systems, there is an equilibrium point that is maintained even though at any time there may appear to be an imbalance. Some wives and husbands argue a great deal, have bouts of jealousy and

dissension, and yet overall they are happy with the marriage. Outsiders observing them often wonder, "How do they stay together?" or declare, "I would never tolerate such treatment." They don't understand that, for many couples, a certain level of tension seems to be required and indeed becomes the catalyst for interest, passion, and excitement.

Stability may be fine for some couples, but there are others who may desire instability even though they don't recognize that desire. If you examine your own situation and you're honest with yourself, you may find that the instability in your marriage is less a fatal flaw than a by-product of the complex ways that you relate to your mate. It is interesting to note how often we hear cynical and disparaging comments about marriage along these lines: "There aren't any really good marriages in which both people are happy, faithful, and committed." We take firm exception to this depressing statement. Settling in for a long-term marital relationship is an enormous and demanding undertaking. Like life, marriage has its failures as well as its successes; it has challenges and built-in difficulties. But in spite of the emotional roller-coaster ride that marriage can be at times, it works for many individuals in basic and important ways.

Loraine describes the success of her marriage of thirty years as somewhat of a mystery. "I don't know if I could tell you exactly what has kept us together all these years. I used to think it was the kids, but they're all grown and gone and we just keep on going. We certainly haven't had an easy life and time together, but sometimes I think people who struggle together and endure the hard times are closer than those who've had it easy. To this day, neither one of us shies away from a good fight, but I don't think either one of us would have it any other way."

Don't automatically assume instability is bad. Rather than looking too closely at your marriage, ask yourself if you really want it to be different and whether if, overall, there is a kind of predictability to the instability that makes it acceptable as long as it is kept within bounds and doesn't lead to a marital crisis. And finally, be aware that desire, excitement, and passion are oftentimes delightfully chaotic. It is a myth that stability is necessarily the ideal state between husbands and wives. Passion and the unexpected are desired by so many men and women today, yet they fail to take responsibility for the effects of those forces on their marriage. Be honest with yourself. Understand that you may be in exactly the kind of marriage that truly fits your needs.

Myth #8 - The more open you are with your mate, the more satisfying the marriage.

This is a belief that is so pervasive it is taken as gospel by the vast majority of couples in America. It would be nice if it were true, but it's not. Relationships are not so simple that mere openness, the expression of what we think and feel, will instantly produce closeness. Like so many "other myths" that confuse marriage today, the idea that openness is synonymous with intimacy and is therefore a prerequisite for a good marriage may have caused as much harm as good.

How open can one be? We are not obliged to conceal basic truths about ourselves from our mates, nor do we have the right to use those truths as weapons against our mates.

There are no marriages in which openness is entirely without boundaries. There are things you don't say, however true they may be, if the predictable effect upon you mate is emotional devastation. If you do choose to drop those nuclear bombs, you had better be prepared for the consequences. Every marriage has its secrets. Only we know the darkest corners of ourselves and all of our vulnerabilities and silent fears. Only we know the emotional details of our past relationships. What we choose to communicate to our mate is filtered and edited, and this is normal. The emphasis upon emotional expression in recent years has probably led to more confusion than clarification. When two people express all of their feelings openly toward each other, they may be a little better informed but a lot more hurt, confused, and angry.

In musing about his long and successful marriage, Al says, "I'm surprised she stuck it out in the early years. I got into this thing where I thought honesty was good for its own sake and that the only way to feel free was to say anything that was on my mind. I thought Ginny always had a problem with anger, because she didn't let it out very often. I used to blow up all the time and even feel proud of myself, as if I were the healthier one. I know now that was a lot of nonsense and pretty irresponsible of me. It was just a whole lot easier to blow off steam than it was to contain some of my frustrations. Ginny was an easy target, because she didn't know how to fight back and I could rationalize the whole situation away as healthy, honest communication."

Privacy is a much-neglected concept in marriage that should be dusted off and reexamined. We believe all healthy marriages allow for some degree of aloneness, time for contemplation, and ultimately coming to grips with one's separate identity. Those who have difficulty with separateness will find themselves asking for, even demanding, openness, not as a forerunner to intimacy but rather as an antidote to experiencing themselves as separate individuals. Further, everyone is entitled to his or her secrets provided they are not damaging to the relationship. The need for privacy should be respected rather than condemned. Excessive communication about personal feelings is often a disguise for something else - accusations, blame, even manipulation.

When in "couple's therapy" one spouse says to the other, "I feel such-and-such," that person should not be surprised when that openness is met with resentment, for such disclosures are so often delivered with an unspoken barb attached: "I feel such-and-such and you are to blame." In some of the best marriages, there is a great deal of dialogue and communication, but it's not about the relationship itself. It is not a sharing of feelings about each other or about the marriage, but about the world and life in general. Indeed, a sense of friendship and closeness often comes about from the exchange of ideas rather than feelings, which have been so overemphasized and over glorified in recent years. One of the main principles behind this myth is the distraction of the emotions in a relationship.

[Skipping down to myth #11]

Myth #11 deals with operation blame game!

When we are growing up, the burden for making our lives feel "right" is squarely on the

shoulders of our parents. Then during early adulthood we become painfully aware that fulfillment is our singular responsibility. When we marry, the burden is all too often put back onto our partner, who becomes an easy scapegoat for our lack of fulfillment. Marriage becomes the primary source of validation and approval. Unfortunately, our marriage partners are the easiest targets for any kind of vague dissatisfaction we feel.

Marriage was never meant to be the antidote to personal difficulties or dissatisfactions, yet for most of us it assumes that position in our lives. Even though many of us know better, we continue to blame our mates for our own problems. If we are depressed, it is their fault. If we had a bad day at the office, it is their fault. If sex is lousy, it is their fault. If the marriage isn't more enjoyable, more alive, and more vibrant, that is their fault too. The truth is, it's a whole lot easier to blame somebody else for something that's not quite right than it is to look inside and realize that we are the only ones who ultimately can change our experiences.

Blaming our mate never changes anything and certainly never creates a sense of fulfillment; it only alienates the one we love. And perhaps even more fundamental, blame puts us out of touch with ourselves and our ability to make choices. Making someone else responsible for our fulfillment also leads to another predictable outcome: guilt. Since no one really can fulfill anyone else, most marriage partners feel some sense of guilt at having let down their mates. This kind of guilt unfortunately never brings us closer to our mates. Rather it drives a silent wedge between us. Moreover, guilt is always accompanied by resentment and a wish to retaliate.

When we are not feeling fulfilled, the problem is not necessarily that there is something wrong with the marriage. There may be something wrong with how we view the quest for happiness. Our mate can be a companion on that journey, but cannot be the ultimate source of gratification. To believe he or she can be is to indulge an expectation that is not only unrealistic but ultimately self-defeating.

As you can see, these two men, whether they're believers or not, have understood the principles of marriage found in the laws of Divine Establishment. Maybe this explains why so many unbelievers have much more success in marriage than do Christians.

Marriage and Communication

Today, communication in marriage is often used by one spouse to try to change the other by nagging, complaining, criticizing, and bullying. This is called the demand syndrome; verbal attacks that seek to produce guilt, or a change of behavior in a spouse. In essence, this means pushing them into the mold that you have for them. Of course, the more you push verbally, the bitterer and more stubborn your mate often becomes. However, this does not mean that the answer to your marital problems is not to talk to each other. Instead, this simply means that marriages change when people change, not when they communicate.

Let's review again some principles from the book, *Husbands and Wives*, by Dr. Melvyn Kinder and Dr. Connell Cowan. We will be noting some important statements so that you can apply principles

to what we have been studying.

They note that:

Unrealistic expectations create tension and frustration in marriage, and then husbands and wives make matters worse trying to negotiate their needs. Because we have all been so programmed to look outside of ourselves for answers, or to be other directed rather than self-directed, we have been led to think that everything that bothers us should be negotiated . In the plan of God, “self-directed” equates to you using the ten problem-solving devices and changing yourself through the Word of God. Therefore, you’re not doing it, doctrine is doing it. “Other directed” is when it's always the fault of your spouse, and you're trying to push them into some mold that you have created.

Continuing, they say:

We have somehow come to believe that the marriage vows have mysteriously been amended to “love, honor, cherish - and negotiate”. Whenever a couple comes into marriage counseling, they typically ask, what can we do to fix things? That is their first mistake! And unfortunately, it is usually compounded by the counselor who then is spurred into some pre-mature action designed to provide magical answers and a variety of marital exercises. Many couples who divorce have first sought marital counseling which obviously failed. For most marriage counselors and therapists, the standard prescription for solving marital tension is "better communication" ...so they say. Which of course is simply a prerequisite for negotiation, but in our experience, couples talking endlessly about their needs only compounds the problem. They all too often grow increasingly frustrated saying “I give up, we’ve tried everything”. Most communication in marriage today has little to do with exchanging new information and it has everything to do with blaming and complaining about the other. The net effect is even more disappointment. Communication has been grossly over-valued, but if communication and negotiation are not the answers then what is?

Well, for the believer we know that the answer lies in spiritual growth through the study of Bible Doctrine. The trouble with most Christians in marriage is the fact that they have not grown up spiritually. Doctrine is the only means of making positive changes in you; it gives you toleration of others, as well as the appreciation for their good or strong points.

The book goes on to say:

Each of us must identify and recognize the inaccurate and exaggerated expectations we hold and then take the responsibility for them. By doing this we learn to gradually remove expectations from marriage as a system and thereby create room for change. And doing this we release both ourselves and our mates from being accountable for both the joys and the disappointments of our marriage. Learning how to take greater charge of our own fulfillment by standing back and doing what we can on our own creates an emotional release. We let go of our negative attachment to our mate. When this is accomplished the atmosphere changes and the other person has to respond in a different way. For example, when someone doesn't feel criticized, he or she is more likely to give freely. The implications of this new approach are

enormous. It takes two people to have a marriage but only one to change it.

We end up feeling helpless and out of control in our marriages simply because we cannot control our partners. The truth is that we need only to learn to control ourselves. We ultimately come to feel alone in our marriage because we have replaced an accepting attitude toward our partner with unconscious expectations that are ultimately self defeating....Husbands and wives can regain greater control over their own lives and marital experience as they are willing to abandon attempts to change their mate and instead focus on themselves.

The point is that using communication to change your mate is problematic, yet this is what psychologists, counselors and even pastors have encouraged time and time again.

Next, they explain their discovery as to why spouses resist change:

When accusations are hurled at you, it's likely that you feel inadequate, guilty and resentful. And also, of course, somewhat stubborn. The same goes for your mate. When you rub two flints together what do you get? A spark! And from the spark what do you get? A fire! We assume that our partner's refusal to change is a reflection of his or her lack of concern, but much of the time that's not true. Most married people do not set out to make their mates unhappy and they certainly don't derive some perverse pleasure from continually thwarting them.

It isn't lack of love for the other person that makes it difficult to change, often it's lack of self-confidence. For example the man who is unimaginative and constricted sexually may not be uncaring at all, he may be just too shy to act any other way. The woman who retreats from intimate communication with her husband may do so not because she doesn't feel love for him but rather because closeness and intimacy make her anxious and uneasy. Verbal attacks only push people into a rigid and defensive stand. When we are under attack we are certainly not open to change. Blame does nothing but underscore growing feelings of displeasure and perhaps even more important it effectively blocks any possibility for enriching one's marriage.

Conversely, when we feel loved and accepted we are more receptive to the notion of modifying our behavior. We can then start to think in terms of self-direction. We can have impact but with deeds rather than words. It is our actions that have effect, not our stated wishes. The marriage system is as highly choreographed as an intricate dance step. Our partners can do what they do only because we are doing what we do. If we change the step, so must they. If we dare to be different then they must be different too. We are only helpless as long as we insist upon behaving in the same old and familiar way. Power comes not from trying to make our mate different but from developing the courage and responsibility to be different ourselves.

Marriage and the Unbeliever

It is possible for marriage between two unbelievers to be successful, but this depends on their attitude toward the laws of divine establishment. This principle is taught in the book of Ecclesiastes:

Enjoy life with the woman whom you love all the days of your fleeting life which He has given to

you under the sun; for this is your reward in life. (Ecc 9:9)

The Hebrew word for "love" is from "ahab" and it means to have love, sexual affection, and personal love. The verb form indicates that this is a present state resulting from past completed action. In other words, the man was designed from eternity past to love the woman. So the corrected translation would read, "**Enjoy life with the woman whom you were designed to love.**"

The phrase "fleeting life" means emptiness which refers to the fact that for the unbeliever there is no salvation or purpose in life. Notice that even though there is no salvation, this unbeliever is commanded to enjoy life with the woman that God has given him. This indicates that the man can have the right woman even in a marriage of unbelievers. So although life is unhappy and empty, he can find happiness with the right woman designed for his life.

The next phrase, "which He [God] has given [not the vanity or the emptiness but the woman] to you under the sun." The Hebrew word for "has given" is "nathan" and here the verb form indicates that you love the woman that God has designed and given you to love. Even for the unbeliever, God gave a woman to man in eternity past. "Under the sun" is a reference to time, or while you're still alive.

So this verse says even a person with an empty life can have happiness if he finds the right woman; and this verse is talking about an unbeliever. Even though a person is an unbeliever, he or she can find happiness with the right person that God designed for their life. Now if an unbeliever with an empty life can have happiness, think of what a believer with Bible doctrine can have!

Marriage Between a Believer and Unbeliever

There are two ways that a believer can become unevenly yoked with an unbeliever:

1. Both were unbelievers at the time of the marriage, and then one made the decision to place their faith in Christ Jesus.
2. One was a believer at the time of the marriage, and either did not know of the prohibition against marrying an unbeliever, or knew and did not care.

In any case **1Co 7:12-14** applies:

If any brother has a wife who is an unbeliever, and she consents to live with him, let him not send her away. And a woman who has an unbelieving husband, and he consents to live with her, let her not send her husband away. For the unbelieving husband is sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified through her believing husband; for otherwise your children are unclean, but now they are holy. (1Co 7:12-14)

Two words in verse 14 need clarification: "Sanctified" means that the believing spouse becomes the basis of blessing by association for the other spouse. "Holy" means they are set apart from the thinking of the cosmos.

In this passage, the believing spouse is given explicit instructions: stay if your husband or wife so desires; you are free to go if they so desire. However, being married to an unbelieving spouse is not an

excuse to get out of an unwanted marriage! You do not have the right to leave a spouse who wants to continue in the marriage. Perhaps one of the reasons for this prohibition is that maybe the unbelieving spouse sees the fantastic integrity you have from the execution of God's plan, they may become a believer through the witness of your life. So, there is hope for the marriage of a believer and unbeliever succeeding even though it is a violation of the divine mandate not to become unequally yoked to an unbeliever. However, if a spouse does depart, he or she should remain unmarried so that they can go it alone, and live the spiritual life without distraction:

Yet if the unbelieving one leaves, let him leave; the brother or the sister is not under bondage in such cases, but God has called us to peace. (1Co 7:15)

Finally, ladies if the man tries to use his authority to stop you from going forward in the Pre-designed Plan of God (PPOG) and forbids you to go to church, or to listen to your Pastor-Teacher, then you must rely on the principle found in **Act 5:29** which states that "**we must obey God rather than men.**"

Marriage Between a Positive Believer and a Negative Believer

The worst marriage partner you can have is a loser believer. A marriage between two believers where one is advancing and one is not, creates the greatest possible antagonism that the sin nature can muster. There is nothing worse than when the sin nature is in control of a negative believer. The negative believer has refused to enter into the spiritual values of the Christian life and is living in reversionism.²

The successful Christian marriage is based on the fact that both spouses are positive toward Doctrine; they use the ten problem-solving devices to glorify God to the maximum. However, when one spouse fails to use equal opportunity to execute the PPOG, the spouse who is positive must use the principle of "going it alone." "If you are married to a believer who is negative, you can still fulfill God's plan for your life by advancing to spiritual maturity. In these cases, "going it alone" is the most important thing in your life. You have to decide for yourself about Bible doctrine, extra diligence is needed; your spouse and family can be sanctified through

² Reversionism is an act of reversing or turning in the opposite way, or a state of being so turned. As believers we were designed to execute the pre-designed plan of God. But in reversionism we turn the other way and cannot be distinguished from our pre-salvation status.

your attentiveness to doctrine based on the principles of 1Co 7:12-14. You do not have the right to divorce your spouse because they are negative toward doctrine or want nothing to do with living the spiritual life. Remember what Peter says about this:

In the same way, you wives, be submissive to your own husbands so that even if any of them are disobedient to the word, they may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives, as they observe your chaste and respectful behavior. (1Pe 3:1-2)

In these two cases, if the unbelieving or negative partner walks away from the marriage by their own volition, then let them go. As for you, you have just been freed from bondage. God has not mandated enslavement in marriage to an unbeliever or negative believer who deserts a positive believer. Once the spouse departs, the other believer is free to go it alone; but you do not go it alone by jumping into another marriage. Instead, take time to reach the objectives of the spiritual life because if you don't, you are missing the opportunity of a lifetime. Wait on the Lord for your next move, and you will have everything that He intended for you, including the right man or the right woman. God is in control and will provide all of your needs at the right time; do not need another spouse to grow up spiritually. In fact, the key in these situations is to increase your intake of doctrine because then you will have protection from entering into another bad marriage. No one who ever waited on the Lord became a loser. Rather, the loser is the one who does not wait for God's guidance.

If you are a believer living in one of two situations, marriage to an unbeliever or marriage to a negative believer, remember a very important principle: God knew billions of years ago that you would be in this situation and He has already made provisions for it. He will never desert you and He will never abandon you. So remember that you are precious in His sight and all that comes your way is for advancement in His plan. The perfect happiness of God is yours for the taking, if you are willing to wait on Him and concentrate on becoming an invisible hero under the protection of doctrine.

Principles to Remember

In concluding this chapter, let's take a look at some principles regarding marriage:

1. People are never the same after marriage; they either change for the better or for the worse, but they're never the same. When two people walk down the aisle to get married they might as well say goodbye to whatever they were at that moment because from that time on, they will never be the same again.
2. People who are losers in life will be losers in marriage. For this reason, losers shouldn't make a decision to marry until doctrine matures them. Now losers are not believers who fail, but are believers who do nothing about their failures. Only the plan of God and the problem-solving devices can change a loser into a winner in the Christian way of life.
3. People who are winners in life are going to be winners in marriage. Notice I said that they're going to be; no one starts out as a winner in marriage. One of the myths about marriage is if you are a winner in life you enter marriage as a winner, but that is absolutely wrong. When you start out in marriage you start out at ground zero and after that, it's either negative or positive, minus or plus. Please note that there is an exception to this principle. If you are separated, divorced, or remarried, that does not necessarily mean that you were a loser. You could be a winner in life, and even a winner while married, but still things might not work. This is because in marriage there are always two volitions involved, and you cannot account for how the other person will use their volition.
4. Marriage definitely changes people. More often than not, what you see is not what you get. Instead, you often get more than what you see, and more than what you bargained for! Sometimes, but not often, you get more than you hoped for.

5. Intimacy does not destroy privacy. You can live in one room, and this closeness will not destroy privacy when you have virtue and integrity. On the other hand, you can live in a mansion with a hundred rooms, and the intimacy of marriage will destroy privacy where there is arrogance and jealousy. Arrogance is the source of intruding upon the privacy of others, and when you intrude upon privacy, you are trying to control another's volition. Many people have ruined their marriage because they kept stifling or suffocating the volition of their mates by intruding upon their privacy. But intimacy does not destroy privacy where there is virtue.
6. Marriage is more than finding the right person; it is being the right person. Learn to trust your mate because if you don't, you have lost any capacity for love; no trust equals no impersonal unconditional love.
7. Never put more pressure on a marriage than it can handle. Therefore, never get married with the idea that it will bring you happiness. Some people feel that once they get married, they'll be happy forever. Wrong! Marriage is not going to solve all of your problems. God did make some rules to ensure happiness in marriage, but the thing about rules is that they must be followed. The trouble is few people seem to know the rules anymore.
8. You cannot build happiness upon self-gratification. Marriage involves much more than beauty, sex, or attractiveness. If all you care about is satisfying yourself, then marriage is not for you.
9. Irresponsible people cannot make a marriage work. If a couple cannot accept the higher authority of God, then how will they make the marriage work? Having problems with authority is a manifestation of built-in arrogance, and arrogance destroys relationships.
10. If you're depending on a happy marriage or a good marriage to sustain you spiritually, you are living under unrealistic expectations. God never intended for marriage to be the main source of strength for believers; instead, the individual who has positive volition toward Bible Doctrine and who understands the Mystery Doctrine of the Church Age has the power of God controlling his soul. If you're getting your strength from a good relationship or a good marriage, then you are getting it from the wrong source, because the Christian life was not designed that way. On the contrary, the Christian life is designed to operate under Divine power, and it is only through the sustaining ministry of God the Holy Spirit that we get our strength.

For some of you, your entire life centers on what happens at home and that is because you have the wrong priorities in life and the wrong perspective of marriage; you expect too much from it and place too much of an emphasis on it. Remember, in heaven you will be like the angels who **“neither marry, nor are given in marriage”** (Mat 22:30). Instead, what you need to concentrate upon is not a marriage or a relationship, but preparing yourself to become an invisible hero and letting God handle the rest because you're not going to be married forever and only what is done for Christ will last.

3 The First Marriage

The precedent for marriage came in the Garden of Eden when a perfect man, and a perfect woman were married by God himself. As such, they had everything going for them: perfect environment, perfect beauty, perfect intellect and anything in life that they could imagine, but it wasn't enough to keep them from sin. This illustrates the principle that a perfect or an improved environment, a new house, a new car, or a new anything is not the answer to happiness in marriage. The very first dispensation¹ demonstrated the fact that perfect environment does not solve problems in marriage. Therefore, if you are striving for better surroundings, the only hope for you is Bible doctrine. Hopefully, at some point you will realize that happiness, blessing and everything that is wonderful in this life are given to us by God. He has far greater wisdom than we will ever have, and He knows exactly what we need to be happy.

Adam and the woman, who at the time was called Ishshah, were created as perfect beings complete with a body, a soul, and a spirit. With that spirit they had the ability to have fellowship with God at any time, and both Adam and the woman were recipients of direct revelation from God. At that time, there was no Bible; the Lord Jesus Christ taught them directly, face to face in the Garden. Because of their perfect souls, they also had wonderful inter-

¹ A dispensation is a period of time in human history expressed in terms of divine revelation. Dispensations are the vehicle by which believers living at a specific time in history can orient to God's will, plan, and purpose for their lives. God's plan is not the same for every dispensation. In fact, the plan is quite different in each dispensation. A dispensation is defined traditionally as a period of time during which a particular revelation of God's mind and God's will is operative, and during which man is tested as to his obedience to that specific manifestation of God's will, purpose, and plan.

action and fellowship with each other. So they had what you might call a perfect spiritual and social life on a daily basis. In addition to a perfect soul and spirit, they were also perfect physically, which made both of them geniuses. They had everything that one could imagine in life that is worthwhile; two perfect people in a perfect environment with the freedom to do whatever they wished.

As we continue, let's note the three stages of the first marriage in history: first, there was the perfection stage where both the man and the woman were perfect. Secondly, there was the stage when they both fell into the state of spiritual death because of sin. Finally, there was the stage of regeneration.

We begin, then, with the perfection stage. Although there are no perfect people involved in marriage today, we can learn much from certain principles that come out of the perfection stage of that marriage in the Garden. The only two perfect people ever involved in marriage were Adam and Ishshah in the perfect environment of the Garden of Eden. Certain rules were pertinent to the perfect environment of the Garden, and certain rules were not to become applicable until after the fall. For instance, the command to separate from parents is found in Gen 2:24 and yet, Adam and the woman did not have any parents to separate from. It was only after the fall that that edict was confirmed (Gen 3:16). Though these rules were not relevant in the state of perfection, the omniscience of God anticipated the fall and could see where they would be important. This leads us to a principle: when certain mandates were given from God concerning the first marriage before they became relevant, it tells us that everything in the first marriage set a precedent for the human race.

The perfection stage ended when Adam relinquished his authority by responding to the woman. Ishshah brought the forbidden fruit to him, and he responded by accepting it when he knew that it was wrong. Satan's superior thinking used dialogue to lure the woman away from the two categories of authority in her life. The first category was the human authority of Adam as her husband. The second authority was the divine authority of the Lord Jesus Christ as her God. So ladies, if you have personally believed in the Lord you have come under His authority as the Prince Ruler of the Church, and if you are married you are also under the authority of your husband. The first sin that Adam committed was listening to and responding to the woman when it should have been the other way around, the woman should have been listening to and responding to the man. Even though he failed in his responsibility Adam's authority was perpetuated in the next two stages: spiritual death and regeneration. So overall, even a perfect marriage could not protect the first couple from sin.

The fall of Adam and the woman was indicative of the fact that their marriage was not strong enough for them to obey God's will. The fall not only was the result of failure in their marriage, but also had its origin in volition, which is also the problem in so many marriages today. People get so wrapped up in their marriage, and its success or failure that they forget all about God yet, it was God who ordained and established the first marriage. What is especially sad today is that Christians leave God out of their marriage just as much as unbelievers do. It's understandable for the unbeliever, but for the believer, to do so contradicts the spiritual way of life.

Fortunately, Adam and Ishshah accepted the salvation of the Lord and recovered. Thus began the regenerate stage that is the grace stage of marriage. One of the results of this regeneration was that Adam changed the name of his wife. Initially, her name was Ishshah, which means "woman," but it became "chawah" which means life. In the English, it is translated Eve, meaning the mother of all living; and she became the means by which God perpetuated the human race. When people believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, all of their past sins are blotted out, and they now have the opportunity to either work out their marriage or, if they are single, they have the opportunity to learn doctrine and make the proper volitional decisions.

The Creation of Ishshah

Let's take a look at how the first marriage came to be:

Then the Lord God said, "it is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him." (Gen 2:18)

- The phrase "Lord God" is "Jehovah Elohim" in the Hebrew, and always refers to a specific member of the Trinity; sometimes the Father, sometimes the Son, and sometimes the Holy Spirit. "Elohim" refers to His essence, while "Jehovah" refers to His personality.

Continuing, "alone" is from the Hebrew word "lebady" and this is a reference to a man without his woman. In the second part of the verse, "make" is from the Hebrew verb "asah" and it means to manufacture something out of something already in existence; in the kal imperfect tense, it describes something that God keeps on doing. The word for "helper" is "ezer" in the Hebrew, and it means someone to aid, help, and to respond to the man. This is the first purpose regarding the role of the

woman in marriage; she was created to help her husband. The Lord did not say that He was going to make him a competitor to compete with him, or a witch to nag him, but a helper suitable for him. This doesn't mean that the wife shouldn't work or that she cannot work, but that it is not to be her most important role in life. The measure in which a woman has to work will be the measure in which she'll have less time to concentrate on her husband. In other words, men, don't expect your wife to be a helpmate and a full time worker. Lastly, the phrase "suitable for him" is "ke neged" in the Hebrew, and it means a helper corresponding to him; that is a helper of the same species.

Continuing:

So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh at that place.” (Gen 2:21)

"Lord God" is a reference to the Lord Jesus Christ who is the Creator of mankind, **“for by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, ... all things have been created by Him and for Him (Col 1:16).** The Hebrew word for "took" is laqach" and it means to seize intensely, or to seize in an intense manner. The woman was pulled or seized intensely out of man, and she is to be brought back intensively or passionately to him.

Then, "He took one of his ribs," this indicates the magnetism that exists between man and woman. The phrase "And closed up the flesh at that place" literally means that He closed up the hole with flesh. Now, a part of Adam is missing, and the only one that can fill that missing part is the woman that God designed for him - Ishshah.

So then, let's look at what God intended:

And the Lord God fashioned into a woman the rib which He had taken from the man, and brought her to the man. (Gen 2:22)

The Hebrew word for "fashioned" is from "banah" which means that He built the woman's body. When God builds or constructs a woman's body, you can bet she was beautiful. The phrase "And brought her" is from the Hebrew verb "bo" and it means He caused her to be brought to the man. This is the principle of the correct woman being brought to the correct man in God's perfect timing. The act of bringing the woman to the man indicates divine delegation of authority being given to the husband over the wife.

The woman was God's first gift to the man and therefore, it is the oldest gift in all of human history. Please note the grace principle: Adam did not construct the woman; God provided this blessing. This marriage set the pattern that man is actually helpless to find the right woman, and it is God who provides this grace blessing. The same God who created man, who provided salvation for man, who gave man Bible doctrine, is the same God who will bring to you your very own right woman. However, this requires waiting on the Lord.

And the man said, “This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man”. (Gen 2:23)

Even though he has not yet touched her, Adam has made the identification that this is his woman

because the identification was made in his soul. Notice that he knew that she was the right one for him before they even touched; and this woman's soul and body were perfectly designed for Adam and no one else.

"She shall be called woman [Ishshah]"; this classification stands forever throughout human history. "Woman," Ishshah, is taken from the Hebrew word, *ish*, which means man; so the woman is called Ishshah because she was taken out of man.

Let's review some of the important principles that come out of the first marriage:

1. Man is as helpless to find the right woman for his life as he is to save himself; therefore, the faith-rest life is required.
2. Marriage was established in the Garden of Eden during the first dispensation.
3. Marriage became a divine institution when Adam and the woman, two perfect people living in perfect environment, were married by God.
4. Though marriage was originally designed for two perfect people, it has only changed in that there is no longer such a thing as a perfect person. Marriage is now designed for two imperfect people, that is, two people possessing an old sin nature.
5. Marriage was not designed, even in the beginning, for happiness, and the idea that marriage brings happiness is a myth. Happiness in marriage comes from virtue and virtue comes from Doctrine.
6. Monogamy was ordained by God to remind mankind that there is only one right man and one right woman.

Relationship Principles to be Learned from the Fall

Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, "Indeed, has God said, 'You shall not eat from any tree of the Garden?'" And the woman said to the serpent, "From the fruit of the trees of the Garden we may eat; but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the Garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat from it or touch it, lest you die.'" And the serpent said to the woman, "You surely shall not die! For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate. (Gen 3:1-6)

Satan attacks whatever God creates. Therefore, he attacks marriage because it was designed by God, he attacks authority because it was given by God, and he attacks the perfect environment of the Garden because it was created by God. Cunningly, Satan plans his attacks by finding the weakest link and making it his target; and in order to carry out his attack, he always uses agents. In the attack on the first humans Satan recognized the woman as the weak link and, understanding the principle of authority, he by-passed it to assail the woman through the greatest weapon of all – conversation. Since Adam understood doctrine, he knew better than to enter into any conversation with a creature that is not supposed to talk. Given that, Satan knew that he couldn't get to the man directly, so he used the woman to get to the man.

The book of 1st Timothy tells us that the man knew too much doctrine to be deceived, so we know that Adam understood exactly what he was doing, and deliberately chose the fallen woman outside of the Garden over the Lord Jesus Christ in the Garden: **“And it was not Adam who was deceived, but the woman being quite deceived, fell into transgression” (1Ti 2:14)**. Satan knows that the best way to get to a woman is through conversation because women are weakest in conversation. So, he didn't have to use violence, intimidation, or threats; he just talked to her. First, he used the serpent to establish dialogue with the woman. Secondly, he used the woman to undermine and destroy the authority of the man. Lastly, he used Adam's original sin in an attempt to overthrow God. Thus, a principle that applies even today: Satan will use those whom we love or admire the most to cause us to stray from God's plan.

As a result, many marriages are broken up by outside influences such as friends or loved ones, who work on the husband or the wife until there is dissatisfaction and discord. Once a problem develops inside the marriage, one of the parties usually goes to someone on the outside and complains about it. Then, outside influences come into the picture and so-called friends, instead of saying, “I prefer to mind my own business; this is something where you need doctrine,” they say, “It's all right; tell me more.” What some of you need are real friends; those that you can really count on and that you'll never lose. This type of friend will level with you, but they will not stick their nose into your affairs. We're told **“he who covers a transgression seeks love, but he who repeats a matter separates intimate friends” (Pro 17:9)**.

Bible Doctrine was taught by the Lord every day in the Garden, and there was only one prohibition; do not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Now, this one tree is forbidden in order to test the volition of mankind, but Satan distorts this volitional test by the insinuation that God is somehow unkind, unfair and even jealous. So he uses a conversation to change the woman's mental attitude from one of appreciation of God's grace, to resentment because of God's one prohibition. As a result, resentment produces bitterness, indignation and hostility. The principle for us today is that if a woman in marriage gets her mind set on one petty thing, under unrealistic expectation, she will actually inflate that thing until it threatens to destroy the marriage. In fact, insignificant, minor, petty things have destroyed many relationships and marriages. It is a frightening thought to realize that a woman's mind-set can take an insignificant factor and enlarge it into a disaster.

Satan, through the serpent, begins the assault by trying to make the woman conscious of the forbidden tree. This is all designed to cause the woman to distrust God and by the subtle twisting of the Word of God, prepares the way for a change of mental attitude in the woman. Even though God has provided everything she could ever want, the woman will be misled and will begin to resent the authority of God and the authority God gave to the man in marriage. Consequently, this will cause the woman to fall into the satanic trap of arrogance. So what this passage reveals is that the woman will begin to think in terms of being equal to or even superior to God, when in fact, she had no authority at all. The principle for today: remember that even in a perfect environment, the woman had no authority, and when women get liberated, they become miserable and frustrated because none of us were ever designed to operate outside of some system of authority.

One thing that we do not know is the reason why the woman was around the tree in the first place, and why she started talking to the serpent. So, we have to speculate a little bit that maybe the woman was bored. Was she bored with perfect marriage, or was she bored with the perfect sex or just completely bored with the man? Entering into conversation with Satan indicates that the woman was

unsatisfied in some way, or else why would she suddenly be more interested in a stranger than in her own husband? Being under the authority of the man, Ishshah had no right to be carrying on any conversation with anyone on the outside. The principle for today: the problem that a lot of women face in marriage is familiarity with her husband, since she's around her husband all the time and knows his flaws and weaknesses. By comparison, strangers are unknown and therefore fascinating, interesting and stimulating.

Continuing in verses 4 and 5, Satan is telling the woman what is best for her and her husband: **And the serpent said to the woman, "You surely shall not die! For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil" (Gen 3:4-5).** In other words, Satan is saying, "both of you will have your eyes opened and Adam needs your help in doing this, so you eat from the tree and see that he gets some too." So Satan makes it sound like she is the only hope for the two of them and she must save the marriage; she must do the work. As we know, she bought into the lie because from her first conversation with Satan until the moment she ate of the forbidden fruit, the woman did not know the principles of the pertinent doctrines. She was totally confused and therefore deceived, which led her down the road to arrogance. In her conversation with Satan, she could not explain what the Lord really said about the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and she did not understand the concept of spiritual death, indicating that she had spiritual death and physical death all mixed up. Because of this, she gave her incorrect impressions of doctrine to Satan, and he used them to exploit her. So instead of uncovering her soul to doctrine, the woman uncovered her soul to evil; and when she did, she fell. The principle: whenever anyone removes themselves from any of the divine institutions or divine authority, arrogance and stupidity are sure to follow. Likewise, when we choose our way over God's way, we are saying, in effect, that we are smarter than God, or that we are an exception to the rule. But remember, **"there is a way which seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death" (Pro 14:12).**

Therefore, Satan is going to persuade the woman to reject the authority in her life by convincing her that by disobeying both Lord Jesus Christ and Adam, she is actually helping her husband. The inciting implication of this is that God is holding something back and that it would be a blessing for both the woman and Adam to get their eyes open. This is the first presentation in human history of the ends justifying the means. But no one can ever reject authority in life and come out on top; it's impossible. However, by now the woman is hooked, and Satan's implication is that she is as good as God; she simply doesn't know it. So Satan successfully planted the seed of dissatisfaction in the woman because she believed him. He fed her vanity, boosted her ego, and made her arrogant enough to reject the authority of her teacher, the Lord Jesus Christ. As a result, disappointment, discontentment, and displeasure began to surface. The principle learned from this is that dissatisfaction results from a person reacting negatively, and not responding positively, and that dissatisfaction destroys marriages.

After the conversation with Satan, the woman became very lustful for the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. She thought that understanding good and evil, rather than understanding Bible doctrine, would make her wise; so she begins to desire something that is negative toward God's plan. Now the dialogue is over, and the woman is looking at the tree with a new desire; a desire that wasn't there until the conversation with Satan created a lust which caused her to concentrate on that which had been forbidden. In the end, she had a change of mental attitude, and her new mind-set caused her to immediately go to that which had been forbidden.

In the Greek, the word for lust is “epithumia” which actually means a strong or an overpowering, driving desire. When we think of lust, we often associate it with something evil, but that is not always the case because we can also lust after that which is good. It is the driving desire of lust that increases the concentration of people and causes those who ordinarily do not concentrate to do so when they are lusting after something. Men often appear to be very attentive and caring toward women, but it isn't attentiveness at all; rather they are concentrating on the moment because of lust. Once the lust has been satisfied or appeased, then the concentration is lost. Many ladies have had their heads turned by someone concentrating on them, not realizing the motivation for the attention is lust, not virtue love. Therefore, any concentration that comes from lust will inevitably result in some category of sin. Men and women have been given certain instincts by God, and they were given for the enjoyment and the preservation of life. However, these instincts, which are more prevalent in the male body, were meant to be under the control of the mind as it is God's will that man should have dominion and control over his natural instincts. However, the mind alone is not enough to accomplish this control; God also gave man a conscience that operates on a higher plane than the mind. In order to function properly, all of our instincts must be in their right place, which is under the control of the mind, heart, and conscience. The tragedy of man in sin is that the order has been reversed and he is being governed by his instincts. When this happens, that which is meant to be under control takes charge and governs life, then there is chaos; and when instincts get control, they become lusts.

The majority of problems in the world are rooted in lusts. Lusts are responsible for much of our troubles in dating, relationships, marriage, families and all other areas of life. Unfortunately, today evil desires are in control, while reason and understanding have been pushed aside. The decay and the steady movement toward destruction in this world result simply from the dominance of lust controlling individuals, and this has turned man into animal. Throughout the Scriptures we're taught that the power behind all of this trouble is a deceitful antagonist – Satan. If there is one thing that characterizes the devil more than anything else, it is this element of deceit and lust. In the Garden, he ruined the life of the woman, the life of the man, and he ruined the world. And he did it by subtlety and deceit. When the devil in his subtlety and deceitfulness came to the woman in the Garden, he flattered her because lust knows that it has only one hope of succeeding and that is to play upon feelings and desires. Likewise, lust discourages thought, and that is a part of its strategy of deceit. It offers what it can never give – satisfaction. So remember that lust never satisfies; it never has and never will because it is wrong. Despite the fact that it never satisfies, it is always offering satisfaction. If only men and women thought ahead, how different life would be. Inevitably, lust does nothing more than rob us of character, purity, honesty, integrity and sensitivity, as well as exhaust us mentally and physically.

The culmination of lustful temptation and the woman's negative volition is found in the following verse:

“When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate.” (Gen 3:6)

Remember, temptation does not become sin until volition is involved. When the woman decided to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, it was an act of volition that became the original sin of the human race. Even though she was completely and totally deceived,

her volition was involved, and she did commit a sin. She sinned because she thought it would give her an advantage. Principle: sin lies in the act of volition whether or not the person understands what they're doing; ignorance is no excuse! At this point the woman was in the status of spiritual death while Adam, her husband, was still in the status quo of perfection. The woman looked at the fruit, longed for the fruit, laid hold of the fruit, ate the fruit, and the result was spiritual death.

With this, the first marriage had problems and was in danger of collapsing. After becoming the first human being to enter into spiritual death, the woman had to go find her husband. When the verse says, "... and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate," the term "with her" means united in marriage, not that he was with her during the dialogue with Satan. So Adam is now looking at the first sinner in human history, his wife, who is now spiritually dead. He must choose between remaining in the status of perfection with Jesus Christ or entering into spiritual death with his wife. Well, we all know what happened; "... she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate." At that moment, Adam found himself in the same predicament as his wife, but Adam sinned because he wanted to eat of the forbidden fruit, not because he was deceived. The woman was deceived all of the way, from the temptation to the fall. Though he had no conversation with Satan, the attack was successful because Adam chose the woman over the Lord. The issue was fellowship with God verses a compatible relationship with the woman, and he chose incorrectly. Some might argue that Adam acted nobly by siding with his wife; however it was not a noble act at all, but outright rebellion and disobedience. He should have been leading, instead of being led.

Therefore, the principle for today: if Satan cannot get to us directly, he will use those whom we love to distract us from the Christian way of life. Throughout the Word of God and throughout human history, Satan has used women to get to doctrinal men: he used Hagar to get to Abraham, he used Potiphar's wife to get to Joseph, and he used Delilah to get to Samson, just to name a few.

This brings us to the cover-up of Adam and the woman:

Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin coverings. (Gen 3:7)

In the state of perfection and innocence, nakedness was not a problem, but in spiritual death, it became an issue in the marriage. Why? Who would see them? Who were they hiding themselves from, the animals? They were the only two people in the Garden so what was the issue? Well, spiritual death has unintended consequences. Nakedness, the normal status in the Garden, had become a social problem that demanded a solution. Their consciences were suffering from guilt; and in their guilt they were covering their genitals because of each other. So here are the only two married people on the earth, and they had a marital problem. They had two options available for solving this problem: one was to seek out the Lord and confess their sin; the other was to rely on a human solution and cover themselves with fig leaves. As we know, they decided on the human solution. The fig leaves represented human righteousness trying to solve the problems of life; or human self-righteousness trying to solve the problems of marriage.

The first marriage was in trouble because the emphasis was on the wrong thing. Instead of emphasizing their nakedness and shame, which weren't their problems at all, they should have focused on the real issue of sin and spiritual death caused by disobedience to God. The principle for today: most marriages break up and fail because they emphasize the wrong thing. Divine viewpoint from spiritual momentum teaches you what is important and what isn't; what should be emphasized and what shouldn't. The first thing that should be emphasized is the fact that we are to take responsibility for our own decisions. No one grows up as a human being until they take the responsibility for their decisions, especially the bad ones. Whenever you blame your spouse or your mate for what goes wrong, you have emphasized the wrong thing.

What's left out of the solution to this marital problem is God. They have no thought of God, no thought of turning to God, and no thought of leaning upon the grace of God. Remarkably, they have completely forgotten about Him. In their self-righteous, human solution, they didn't cover their whole body with fig leaves, just their genitals. In covering their genitals, or their loins, they made a statement that said "we have a big guilt complex because we've done something wrong, so we are going to cover that part of our physical body that has given us stimulation, arousal, and happiness; we're going to deny each other sex." Up to that point, they had a fantastic sexual life that had bound them closely together. The sexual life between Adam and the woman was the ultimate in human gratification, so much so that after they sinned they tried to do penance and deny themselves of sex because of their guilt. The principle: after the original sin of Adam and the woman, the first act in spiritual death was an act of human good and the function of legalism. At that moment, they both knew the difference between good and evil. Apparently they figured that if they were right with each other, then they would be right with God. Sadly, that's the spiritual way of life to a lot of Christians, but it's false and is nothing more than legalism that leads to moral degeneracy. Today, many Christians with marital problems never consult doctrine; they're not interested. Only the grace of God, through Bible doctrine, can resolve the problems of marriage.

As a result, the first marriage was temporarily destroyed through the function of legalism. Notice that it was not destroyed by fornication or adultery, but it was destroyed by legalism. In fact, legalism destroys many more marriages than all of the other so-called destroyers put together. When you get two legalistic people in marriage, they are constantly trying to justify themselves when marital problems occur. So what is legalism? Legalism is a self-righteous state of mind, and it is self-justification in function. It is Satan's greatest tool to divert the believer's focus away from the grace of God, and on to human works. His attack is especially concentrated on Christian relationships and therefore, legalism is the great enemy of the Christian.

If a woman without an old sin nature can be deceived, think of how easy it is for you ladies, who have old sin natures, to be deceived. Therefore, your only hope is doctrine. Bible doctrine provides the weapons that a woman needs to protect her soul from evil. However, this requires subordination to her right pastor-teacher. Just as love for her man protects her body from sinfulness and improper exposure, so the woman's respect and subordination to her right pastor protects her soul from evil. Discipline and authority are necessary for learning and for clothing the soul with knowledge and understanding. Any area in your life in which you do not have sound doctrine is an area open to deception. Anything that we think or do that is not oriented to the way God thinks is deception. Any attitude outside of grace is deception; any action outside of faith is deception; and any thought outside of God's love is deception.

The serpent's voice is still around today telling us that God's way cannot make us happy and that he has a better way. Unfortunately, many Christians are listening to that viewpoint and are going in the wrong direction to find happiness. As such, they are trying to improve themselves and their environment, rather than improve their souls through doctrine.

In verse 8 when our Lord enters the scene, Adam and the woman have a great shock; they discover that the fig leaves are useless:

And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the Garden in the cool of the day. (Gen 3:8)

The word "cool" is the Hebrew word "ruach," and it means the spiritual time of the day, or the time for Bible class. But the man and his wife hid themselves among the trees of the Garden from the presence of the Lord God. Prior to the fall, the trees in the Garden had been a source of pleasure and blessing, but in spiritual death they are the place of fear and rejection. What they once enjoyed in perfection they came to use as a hiding place. Because of their actions, they are in a state of total helplessness, total depravity and total desperation. Adam and the woman suffered from a guilt reaction, and therefore a culprit must be found to satisfy the conscience. There are two things people do when they have a guilty conscience: they try to pass the guilt on to others and make innocent people the victims of their guilty conscience. Or they keep their guilt within and blame others for their failures. The principle here is that spiritual death, plus a guilty conscience, equals production of human good.

Now we're ready for the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ:

Then the Lord God called to the man, and said to him, "Where are you?" (Gen 3:9)

Notice that He didn't call to the woman, because it was the man who was responsible to answer to Him. Also note that it was the Lord who broke the silence, which was an act of grace. The spiritually dead couple could not face God, so in grace He sought them out. The implication of our Lord's question was not "where are you?" but rather, "Adam, why are you where you are?" Keep in mind that He knew exactly where they were because Jesus Christ is God, Jehovah Elohim, so He knows exactly where everyone and everything is at all times. **"And he [Adam] said, I heard the sound of Thee in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked, so hid myself" (Gen 3:10)**. When confronted by God, Adam could only hide himself, because he had formed a conclusion -but his conclusion was entirely wrong. The word for "afraid" is from the verb, "jare," and it is a reference not to shame, but to fear. The principle is that fear is the function of spiritual death as an emotional sin and, of course, spiritual death has a lifestyle of fear. When a person is in spiritual death it is inevitable that things in life will frighten them, because fear is lack of thinking under pressure. In the case of Adam and the woman, they could not think in terms of Bible doctrine and therefore, they were afraid. The principle that applies for today is this: thinking solves problems; emotional reaction does not. You have to get back to thinking if you want to solve your problems.

In the next few verses, we see the trial begin when **"And He [God the Son, Jehovah Elohim] said, 'Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I**

commanded you not to eat?” (Gen 3:11). God in His omniscience knew that the man and the woman had eaten from the tree, so His questions were designed to focus Adam’s attention on the act of disobedience rather than on their nakedness and shame. The important word to note in this verse is “naked,” which in the Hebrew is “erom.” Interestingly, it doesn't mean having no clothes on; it means being guilty and condemned. Therefore, nakedness was not the problem; guilt was the problem. Adam is focusing in on his guilt and shame, while the Lord wants him to focus in on the real problem, which is spiritual death resulting from eating of the tree of knowledge.

In response to the Lord’s questions, **the man said, “The woman whom Thou gavest to be with me, she gave me from the tree, and I ate” (Gen 3:12).** In this response, the point that we need to focus on is the fact that Adam would not take responsibility for his own decisions in the Garden; instead, he blamed the woman for his own bad decision. Of course, the woman would not take responsibility either. So the perfect marriage, with two perfect people, in perfect environment, didn't mean a darn thing. Even though Adam was responsible as the authority over the earth, and in his marriage, he blamed the woman for the function of his own free will. Anyone in a position of authority must be quick to recognize his mistakes and correct them; that is leadership in authority. Notice in verse 12 that while Adam blamed the woman, he also blamed God: “the woman that You gave me.” In essence, he was saying, “It's your fault God; she made me do it!” Adam could have said no, but instead he used his own volition to disobey God. Unfortunately, that set a precedent that has come down to us today and it has destroyed many marriages. Principle: any person in a place of authority must be quick to recognize his mistakes and correct them, because you cannot exercise authority without leadership.

Every human being must take the responsibility for his own decisions and actions in life, as well as understand that you can never solve your problems when you blame others for your misery, your unhappiness, or your suffering. It is inevitable that throughout our life as a Christian we will sin, perform human good, and do or think evil. But all of our decisions have natural consequences for which we must take full responsibility, because a sure trip to unhappiness comes by blaming others for our problems and not seeing them as a result of our own bad decisions. As Paul stated in **Gal 6:7, “Do not deceived; God cannot be mocked. Whatever a man sows, this he will also reap.”** Therefore, if you do not take responsibility for your own bad decisions, then you can never use the rebound and recovery provision of 1Jo 1:9, which means that you will be permanently out of fellowship. If that happens, you will either be grieving or quenching the Holy Spirit at any given time. So the principle in this is that you cannot grow up as a human being unless you take responsibility for your own decisions. This is important in marriage, because a weak man will inevitably blame his wife for any problems - as if he did not make any of the decisions to begin with, starting with the decision to marry her in the first place. Such an attitude is cowardly and arrogant. This is a man who has no sense of responsibility at all, and therefore should be called a male, not a man. If husbands blame their wives, instead of taking the responsibility for their own volition, marriages will fail.

When the Lord faced and interrogated the woman, she could not blame God or Adam, but she did have someone to blame - the serpent:

The Lord God said to the woman, “What is this you have done?” And the woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.” (Gen 3:13)

At that time, the serpent was the most beautiful of all creatures in the animal kingdom, being very beautifully colored and decorated. Also, contrary to what we know it as today, the serpent did not crawl, and was not full of dangerous venom. Instead, it was more like a domestic pet. Regardless, one thing that the woman should have recognized about her pet, the serpent, was this: he not only suddenly started speaking her language, but he also spoke it magnificently. Yet, the woman wasn't even suspicious. So the principle is that neither the woman nor the man had the capacity to accept the responsibility for their own decisions; spiritual death has made them totally immature. Consequently, the man and the woman, at one time united in perfect marriage under perfect environment, have now completely failed. As a result of their failure, the Lord judged them, but each individually. In **Gen 3:16** we have the judgment of the woman: **To the woman He said, "I will greatly multiply your pain in childbirth [or pregnancy], in pain you shall bring forth children; yet your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you."** Therefore, part of the woman's judgment was that she began to ovulate, which means to produce eggs or discharge them from an ovary, and by this she could become pregnant and give birth to children. With that, there were various categories of pain involved for the woman:

1. There is pre-, mid-, and post-menstrual pain.
2. There is pregnancy and morning sickness.
3. There is pregnancy and potential subjectivity.
4. There is pain in giving birth.
5. There is menopause and potential involuntary melancholia.

All of these date back to the fall and original judgment of the woman.

Also after the fall, sex became bittersweet for the woman: sweet because it was still related to recreation and pleasure, but bitter because of the pain that accompanied ovulation, pregnancy and child bearing. So, what gives the woman optimum pleasure is also the source of her greatest discomfort. Additionally, part of the curse is the fact that the body of the woman, with its magnificent symmetry, is destroyed temporarily by pregnancy. Every pregnant woman is a reminder of the curse of the fall, and the original sin of Adam and Eve. The problems and ailments of ovulation, menstruation and pregnancy are a memorial to the justice of God, while pregnancy is a reminder of the woman's revolt against God and her husband. Therefore, every birth becomes a reminder of divine justice.

After judging the woman, the Lord turned to the man:

Then to Adam he said, "because you listened to the voice of your wife, and you have eaten from the tree concerning which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat from it'; cursed is the ground because of you; in toil or sorrow you shall eat from it all the days of your life." (Gen 3:17)

The phrase "because you have listened" is from the Hebrew word, "shama." The Lord had given Adam a role of double authority: first, as the ruler of the world, and second, as ruler over his wife. Adam's sin began when he decided to listen to his wife because he compromised authority; he was led when he should have been leading, and he was influenced by her when he should have been influencing her. It was the responsibility of the man to be the leader and set the

agenda for his relationship with the woman, but Adam failed to do this. By subordinating himself to his wife, who had no authority, Adam became spiritually dead, and lost the rulership of the world.

The words, “all the days of your life,” indicates that physical life will come to an end. Although spiritual life is eternal, physical life is only temporary. So when Adam sinned, he became spiritually dead and no longer had eternal life, even though he still had physical life. As the predecessor of all human life, his sin nature was imputed to all who came after him, and because of that, humans are born physically alive, but spiritually dead.

Notice that Adam’s sin is mentioned, but the woman’s sin is not. Although the woman sinned first, she was ignorant and under deception. However, Adam’s original sin was one of cognizance; that is, he knew what he was doing. Nevertheless, each is responsible for their own sin, because they chose to do it. Since their actions were independent their punishment was also independent. As the ruler of the world, and the progenitor of the human race, it was Adam who was responsible to God. Consequently, Adam would have to work the earth in order to reap its harvest, instead of having it just come to him as before. Such was the judgment for the man; and today this would refer to the marketplace or the place of business. Also due to Adam’s sin, the Lord cursed the ground:

For the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. (Rom 8:20-21)

As a result of the fall, Adam lost control over all the earth, including the animals; and the curse will not be removed until the Second Advent, when all will be corrected by our Lord during His millennial rule.

Although we just saw that the man’s curse is to work, we need to note an important principle: the Bible does not teach that a woman cannot work to support the family. Rather, if so desired or necessary, both husband and wife may work in the marketplace. Whether or not a wife works is a personal matter between her and her husband, and together they should decide what is best for them without any outside interference.

Notice how the marketplace is described. **“Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you; and you shall eat the plants [vegetables] of the field” (Gen 3:18).** The use of thorns in the Bible indicates hardship. Being in the marketplace and having to work hard every day can be tough on a marriage, because there is wear and tear on the person who has to work, and the other spouse must understand this. In our day and age, it is very common to have both the husband and the wife working in the marketplace. The pressures that this places on a marriage are very extensive, and therefore it requires great thoughtfulness, consideration, courtesy, respect and sensitivity on the part of each spouse. The man who will not go to work, and makes his wife do the work is a real thorn in the flesh, as well as a double curse. In fact, the Bible says that a man who refuses to support his family and work has denied doctrine and is worse than an unbeliever.

The curse of life and death continued as the Lord told Adam:

“By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread [the curse of physical work] till you return to the ground [the curse of physical death], because from it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return.” (Gen 3:19)

“Sweat” may be inward or outward, physical or mental labor. Man must work to survive and earn a living; such is the curse of life. But God has turned cursing into blessing, so that there is the challenge of doing a good job as unto the Lord. Just as regeneration turns cursing into blessing regarding spiritual death, so God's grace turns cursing into blessing with regard to physical death. For the believer, physical death is God's victory.

In **Gen 3:20**, we have the first marriage in regeneration: **Now Adam called his wife's name Eve or life, because she was the mother of all living.** Adam called her “life” as a testimony to her personal faith in Jesus Christ, and because “life” has a double meaning: spiritual life and physical life. As such, Eve would become the mother of all those who would be physically born, as well as the mother of the One who would provide spiritual life for all mankind – the Lord Jesus Christ.

As a sign of their salvation and forgiveness, **“the LORD God [Jehovah Elohim] made garments of skin for Adam and his wife, and clothed them” (Gen 3:21).** Up to that point, they had been wearing fig leaves, but the garments of skin replaced the fig leaves. The garments of skin form a picture of salvation, because the animals had to die to provide the skins for man. Therefore, this is symbolic of the work of our Lord on the Cross.

4 Sex

As we begin this part of the study, one important principle to remember is that God is the creator of sex, not Satan. Unfortunately, some believers think there is something unhealthy or dirty about an active sex life, but that is incorrect and contrary to the Word of God. As we will see, God actually created sex as a means of enjoyment, and it was given as a part of the solution to man's loneliness. We should thank our loving Creator that we experience sexual desire, because not only is physical intimacy ordained by God, but also the physical pleasures of sex are God-given. Most of us are filled with sexual urges, and at times we wish that we did not have to cope with them; yet God is the creator of those urges. Therefore, our bodies have the capacity to be delightfully stimulated because God made it so. Pleasure, as C.S. Lewis once pointed out, is God's invention, not the devil's.

Sadly, mankind has made a goddess of sensuality, worshipping sexual pleasure, instead of receiving it with thanksgiving. As a result, men and women have become slaves of sex rather than enjoying sex for what God has designed it to be. In the lives of the average married couple, sex is occasional and a small part of their marital experience; it takes less time than practically anything else in life. While sex can be very wonderful, it isn't the most important thing in life or marriage, and it certainly is not the answer to your problems; you cannot build a marriage on sex. Nevertheless, sex was designed by God in the Garden of Eden to be an expression of love in marriage. In fact, the Scriptures teach that sex was a gift from God to combat loneliness and isolation. This is what God meant when He said, **“for this cause a man shall leave his father and his mother and shall cleave to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh” (Gen 2:24).**

“For this cause a man shall leave his father and his mother,” does not mean that you can never see your parents again, but rather it means that you are independent of them because marriage is a state of independence from previous relationships. The word “cleave” is from the Hebrew word “dabaq,” and it means to coalesce, to unite in sex, to be joined together or to be glued together. So in this passage, it indicates that sex was designed by God, not only as an expression of love, thoughtfulness and tenderness, but also as an expression of the unity between a man and woman in marriage. It is a relationship that shuts out the outside and fosters the ultimate of privacy between two people.

The phrase “and they shall become one flesh,” also refers to the sexual relationship that God designed to exist in marriage. It is used to describe the concept of sex as being an intimate relationship around which a wall is built in order to protect the privacy and the intimacy of the marriage. It isn't a wall that you can see, but it is one that no one should pass through. Therefore, the invisible wall, established by the intimacy of the sexual relationship, gives the marriage privacy and blessing, and so what goes on behind the bedroom door is nobody's business, including the father and mother. So, the precedent here is that every marriage is to have a wall around it that no one else can see and no one else can pass through.

Remember that sex in marriage is designed to establish an invisible intimacy between a man and a woman in society. If the husband or wife is jealous, vindictive, implacable, and full of self-pity or

revenge, they cannot physically or mentally give of themselves, and consequently, the invisible walls of the castle are destroyed. The purpose of sex is for husbands and wives to complete each other; the husband is missing a piece and the wife is missing a piece, but together, they are whole. Thus, sex portrays the inter-dependence of marriage. Therefore, sex is a part of marriage, but it is not the most important part, and so it is obvious that each spouse must bring something more than sex into the marriage. That's why they should be the best of friends; thoughtful, tender and understanding of one another. In this way, all the pieces come together, and each find in the other all that is necessary to build the castle of marriage. God, in his marvelous sense of humor, invented sex so that each would lack something that the other can supply. As such, sex can be an expression of love, but that is only when true intimacy is involved. Remember that sex is given in marriage and no other place under God's law; this is the way that God has designed it, and violation of those laws inevitably brings all kinds of misery and unhappiness to those involved.

From this passage we learn a principle: sex began when man was perfect and it pre-existed the fall of man and the first sins in the human race. Although we do not know how long Adam and the woman were in the garden before the fall - it could have been one year, it could have been 1,000 years, we do know that they had sex long before they were commanded to have children; hence, sex was given for recreation, not procreation.

Often, because of embarrassment and guilt, many believers keep their sexual desires hidden. This has produced loneliness and alienation, so much so that many have been driven away from God because of the overwhelming guilt. This then becomes a paradox, because what God gave to end human loneliness often proves to cause the very thing it was ordained to abolish. Unfortunately, this problem is caused by the overriding factor of failure to learn Bible doctrine. Some people choose a life of isolation because it is safe for them, as they have been burnt in the past, and they are not willing to trust anyone again. As a result, they would rather go through the discomfort of loneliness than take another chance and be rejected. They do so not because at heart they prefer isolation, but because they fear rejection and hurt. For them, a human encounter is loaded with fear, and so they are torn between their desire for intimacy, and their fear of rejection. This problem cannot be resolved by ignoring the fact that it exists. In fact, most normal individuals long to put aside the fear of being rebuffed and the overt facades, and instead be known and loved for who they really are. Such a desire is a natural, God-given need.

To get a better sense of this, let's look at a passage in the book *Eros Defiled: The Christian and Sexual Sin* (1977) by John White:

A human encounter is fraught with fear, the fear that the other will reject and despise me when he discovers what I am. I am torn between the yearning to expose myself and the fear of shame and of another's scorn. I long to cast aside every shred that covers me and to be known and loved for my naked self.

Yet though I am tired of the many masks I hide behind, the disguises with which I confront the world I live in; though they are burdensome and heavy, concealing the deformities and weaknesses I hate and fear, who can assure me that it is safe to do so?

Yet if I do not expose myself, how will I ever discover the wonders of being enfolded by and

lost in another? Erotic pleasure is the most superficial benefit of sex. It is a delight but only the delight of a moment. The bodily exposure that arouses and accompanies it can be both profoundly symbolic and powerfully healing. It symbolizes the uncovering of our inner selves, our deepest fears and yearnings.

As I took tenderly the body of another, as I experience what it is to feel the tenderness of another's caresses and the delight of knowing I am loved as well as loving, it seems momentarily impossible to separate myself from my body. So much am I a bodily creature that the one who accepts my body, caresses also with tenderness my inmost being, or so at times it seems. It makes sense then that sexual relations be confined to marriage. For acceptance and mutual disclosure are not the activities of a moment but the delicate fabric of a lifetime's weaving.

The bodily exposure of nudity in sex is to symbolize the uncovering of our inner selves, and this means our deepest fears, as well as our deepest desires. When a person experiences what it is like to feel the tenderness of another's embrace, a tremendous need is fulfilled, and that is the God-given delight of knowing that you are loved and are able to love in return. This is the union between the bodies and the souls and what God meant when He said, "and the two shall become one flesh." But keep in mind that we are talking about sex in marriage, because while legitimate sex in the realm of marriage can unify the soul and body, illegitimate sex outside of marriage can destroy the soul and body.

Pre-marital Sex

Too often man distorts sex through pre-marital adventures and, of course, unfaithfulness in marriage. In its proper sequence, sex is a fantastic part of the marital relationship. However, the Bible teaches that sex outside of the marital relationship is a sin. In fact, the Bible teaches that even though two people have agreed to get married or are engaged, sex before marriage is still a sin. Therefore, pre-marital sex is a sin because God says it's a sin and in His ultimate wisdom, He knows that premarital sex is one of life's great destructive forces. Since God is fair and God is just, we know that He is extremely interested in our happiness and welfare.

But what about single men and women whose hunger for sex cannot be satisfied? What of those who twist and turn in restless sleep haunted by fantasies that mock and inflame them? While some are able to experience the peace of sexual abstinence when they need to, others are tormented. However, as we will note, everything depends upon their mindset, or their mental attitude. The dangers of pre-marital sex should be taught to teenagers by their parents, they should be taught to our youth in prep-school, and they should be taught from the pulpit. Pre-marital sex destroys virtue! Additionally, pre-marital sex destroys the standards that make a relationship between a man and a woman a wonderful thing.

Many people think God said "thou shalt not commit adultery" [adultery includes any form of fornication] because he didn't want you to have fun. On the contrary, He doesn't want you to engage in sex outside of marriage because He knows that it is destructive to the soul: **"The one who commits adultery with a woman is lacking sense; He who would destroy himself does it" (Pro 6:32)**. God wants you to be able to discern the one that He has designed for your life, but all fornication, adultery,

and pre-marital sex destroys the capacity for the man and the woman to recognize the one that God has designed for their life. Prohibition of adultery and fornication is God's way of protecting the principle that one woman is made for one man; no one else will do. So it is not that God is unfair, but rather, He is trying to protect us from destroying our capacity for happiness. Pre-marital sex causes scar tissue of the soul or hardness of the heart, and the scar tissue that results can be physiologically devastating:

This I say therefore, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind, being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart; and they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality, for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness. (Eph 4:17-19)

The effect of being with the wrong woman does something to the male; it causes him to lose his aggressiveness, and it creates the potential for him to lose his sexual ability. Moreover, he also loses his capacity to provide pleasure for the one he was designed for. In extreme cases, this can get so bad that the lust for sexual excitement can lead to homosexuality.

As for the woman, in most cases she becomes involved with either frigidity or nymphomania. Frigidity is a rejection of sexual activity marked by abnormal sexual indifference. Usually it is caused by a guilt complex and fear of the past, with the result that the woman begins to look at sex and sexual expression as being something dirty. On the other hand, nymphomania is an excessive desire for sexual activity. Both of these destroy the woman's happiness, and she can never find happiness in anything she tries.

For more on this, let's again look at another passage from the book *Eros Defiled* by John White:

Each time that sexual relations spring from casual encounters, something of their healing and life-giving nature is destroyed. The body is neither for fornication nor fornication for the body (see 1Co. 6:13-20). God designed us to learn in the body and through the body the intimacy of a close personal relationship. The body is not designed to benefit us from sexual relationships outside of commitment. Such relationships enslave and destroy.

It was the vow and the lifelong commitment that made the difference, not the piece of paper that bore witness to them. And any knowledge of man by woman or of woman by man that falls short of these conditions, falls short of what God intended sex to be. It is less than and cheaper than the real thing.

We must be careful while talking about sexual sin not to fall into the trap of feeling that the physical aspect of sex is itself sinful. That being said, let's consider some principles:

1. Sex before marriage destroys standards and principles and substitutes emotion for rapport-love; and no marriage has ever succeeded on emotion alone. The couple involved in pre-marital fornication is in the process of destroying the very standards that they need for a successful marriage.
2. Pre-marital sex destroys the standards of virtue on which compatibility must be based.

Our society has become so sex-crazed that we cannot go anywhere without having it slammed in our faces; it is everywhere we turn. Yet, nothing we hear or see is God's viewpoint; it is all human viewpoint. For this reason, it is so important for Christians to protect themselves with Bible doctrine. Without virtue, there are no solutions to problems in relationships. God said "thou shall not fornicate" because He knew it would destroy our virtue.

3. Pre-marital sex destroys the standards that the relationship needs to survive and can cause couples to depend on their emotions for the strength of their love. While love can be emotional at times, and that's fine, relying too heavily upon emotion destroys love. Emotion is a wonderful thing in love and it plays an important part in a relationship, but only when it's normal. However, when you bring in fornication, and its resultant sin, you switch to emotion for the strength of your love and virtue is no longer a focal point of the relationship.
4. Pre-marital sex leads to emotionalism. There is no spiritual strength in emotions. Emotions are irrational; they have no doctrinal content, no ability to reason, no ability to apply doctrine and no common sense. Therefore, you cannot solve your problems with emotions, and you cannot perpetuate human love with emotion. Emotion will not carry love! So, loss of standards through pre-marital intimacy and reverting to the emotions of the soul destroys the very foundation and the ability for a successful marriage.
5. The strength of romantic love is virtue. Virtue is based on thinking, not on emotion and it comes from learning, thinking, and applying Bible doctrine, especially the problem-solving devices. Pre-marital sex causes people to drop the standards of doctrine that they have learned and replace them with the viewpoint of the cosmic system.
6. Sex before marriage will create handicaps in the marriage, and handicaps in marriage are generally not easily overcome. For instance, promiscuous people who get married will find it difficult to respond to one mate because in their mind, they'll often be thinking about someone else who did it better. As that worldly song goes, "How's your life been going on, I've got a wife now, years we've been going strong, there's just something that I've got to say, sometimes we make love and I still see your face."
7. Pre-marital sex destroys discernment. Once you get into pre-marital sex, the line between right and wrong becomes blurred. It doesn't matter how smart you think you are or how much doctrine you've learned, pre-marital sex will cloud your judgment. When that happens, it turns true, personal love into pseudo-love and ends up blocking the function of impersonal love as a problem-solving device.
8. Believers must take responsibility for their own decisions. If you are a woman, this means that you do not blame him and say he made you do it. And, if you are a male, you do not blame her and say that she seduced you. Instead, you must take responsibility for your own decisions and learn to say no; your future happiness depends on it!

So, what is to be done with all those who have transgressed in this area? The answer is nothing! A believer's walk is between him and the Lord; it is nobody else's business. Now, what if you are one of those who have transgressed? Your answer lies in the rebound¹ technique: rebound, recover and move on. Continue going forward under the grace policy of God; execute the pre-designed plan of God and glorify Him.

¹

¹Rebound is the first problem-solving device and is a grace function to the believer. The rebound technique is a procedure given in Psa 32:5; 1Co 11:28; 1Jo 1:9, in which the believer simply acknowledges or names his known sins to God the Father. Because the Justice of God the Father is satisfied with the sacrifice of Christ, He is faithful and just to forgive us of all of our sins, which includes both the known and unknown sins. The use of the rebound technique results in restoration to fellowship, recovery of the filling of the Holy Spirit, and re-entry into the pre-designed plan of God.

Although you cannot change the past, if you are alive, you can change the future. The consequences of past sins and failures are in God's hands, but the future belongs to you under the principle of logistical grace. It isn't what we do that counts, but rather, it's what God does that counts. For comfort, listen to the words of the Lord to a woman who was caught in a promiscuous act:

And straightening up, Jesus said to her, "Woman, where are they [her accusers]? Did no one condemn you?" And she said, "No one, Lord" And Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn you; go your way. From now on sin no more [in that area]." (Joh 8:10-11)

Nothing so liberates a person from the bondage of sin as the intoxicating discovery that he or she is freely accepted and forgiven.

Sex and the Christian

So, what should be a Christian's attitude toward sexual pleasure? A Christian must bear in mind these principles:

1. He or she must realize that God made their bodies and this includes the sexual parts. God equipped the body with a nervous system designed to enable each of us to experience exquisite pleasures; pleasures that the Scripture teaches anticipate the rapture our spirits will one day enjoy through a loving relationship with Christ Jesus.
2. Pleasure is a by-product in life, not a goal. Unfortunately for many today, hedonism has caused them to be pleasure-seekers and they become controlled by the pursuit of pleasure, and the avoidance of pain. Most of us have already discovered that when we devote ourselves solely to pursuing pleasure, it ceases to be a delight. On the other hand, when we devote our lives to loving obedience to God, we find that pleasure starts to look for us.
3. Sexual pleasure was designed to be enjoyed within the confines of marriage. The physical side of sex is only a part of a larger picture. As we mentioned earlier, one of the first purposes of sex is to combat isolation and loneliness. Loneliness can end only where trust exists; a trust that has its foundation in the commitment that a man and woman make toward one another. Within such a relationship, the physical pleasures of sex may blossom, and mysteriously deepen to solidify the relationship.
4. God has designed life to be stimulated by built-in pleasures and as such, He has placed within our bodies the mechanisms to assure that our physical needs are met. He has so designed the working of our bodies that we want to do that for which it was designed. Sexual desires are created within us to assure us of life and health. As our needs are met, we learn from experience how pleasant and contented we feel when we let nature take its course. God gave us pleasure to promote our physical health. So, it is between husband and wife as to what form of erotic stimulations they will pursue in the privacy of their bedroom.
5. There is to be a system of rapport established in sex in which the woman is completely

and totally satisfied. The secret of a man being a great lover is to be in control of himself, and to understand everything necessary to satisfy a woman. Since the woman is a responder in marriage, it follows that a man cannot subject his wife to abuse, or mistreatment, and then expect her to respond to his advances when he's ready to make love.

6. It is absolutely necessary for the man to see to it that the woman is satisfied sexually in order to establish his authority in marriage. The man that never satisfies his wife fails to establish his authority. This takes place when a man is only interested in self-gratification, and the woman remains totally unsatisfied. The woman is usually willing to submit to and respect the man who has satisfied her sexually. Therefore, his happiness actually comes from the magnificent response he gets as the woman is satisfied.

As far as sex is concerned, in the Christian way of life there is a double system of authority given in **1Co 7:4** that says **“the wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does; and likewise also the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does.”** With that being said, the woman has as much right to initiate sex as does the man. The idea that the man is the authority does not mean that he must always initiate sex; but rather, the woman can be the initiator in this area and many times should be. This authority over each other's body gives both partners the right to initiate a sexual liaison, and it makes both accountable to respond. When it comes to sex, each one has authority; each has something missing that the other fulfills, and so each one can be an initiator. Overall, sex is the expression of freedom in the marriage. The idea that the woman should stand around waiting for the man to start something is completely out of line with what the Bible says. When it comes to sex, authority is cancelled out and replaced by responsibility, because both spouses have an area of responsibility and an area of authority in their relationship with each other. Just as a woman has certain areas of response, and all women are different, so too, men have certain areas of response, and all men are different. So just relax and enjoy each other; you have a whole lifetime to learn about your mate.

Sex alone will not produce compatibility, so each partner in marriage must bring something more than sex into the union. Behind the invisible wall of sex, there must be something far greater and more lasting, and that is the principle of virtue. The Christian couple (husband and wife) must bring virtue, and positive volition toward doctrine into the marriage so that there will be a mental and spiritual rapport. Happiness in marriage comes from virtue, not from the marriage itself, and certainly not from sex. No Christian marriage will ever be what God designed it to be unless the two believers understand the Plan of God.

Closing Review and Principles

1. Sex in marriage was given as a part of man's solution to being alone; it is not a problem-solving device.
2. Not only is physical sex itself ordained by God, but also the physical pleasures of sex are God-given.
3. The human body has the capacity to be stimulated sexually because God made it so.
4. The bodily exposure of nudity in sex is to symbolize the uncovering of our inner selves.
5. Erotic pleasure is the most superficial benefit of sex. Although it is a delight, it is only the delight of a moment.
6. Sex is the ultimate in human intimacy. God designed us to learn through the intimate sexual

contact of two bodies and the intimacy of a close personal relationship. However, the body is not designed to benefit us from sexual relationships outside of the commitment of marriage. Such relationships enslave and destroy.

5

The Duty of The Husband

When it comes to the ladies, men are practically helpless. So God, in His grace, gave the authority in the marriage to the man. Had He given it to the woman, many men would be living in slavery, because it is a known fact that women are much stronger than men. In fact, there are many areas where women are tougher than men. For instance, they are much tougher than men in the soul. While it is said that they are the weaker sex, they are only weaker as far as physical development is concerned, because women's bodies are designed for symmetry, not muscles. However, when it comes to controlling his woman, the average man is absolutely helpless and doesn't stand a chance, because women are much stronger than men mentally. That's the reason why a little spitfire woman can quickly reduce a macho muscle man to a little boy. So again, God has given the man authority over the female, and not the other way around.

If the man is dancing around the female, the marriage is out of order and it isn't going to work. Women tend to have an arrogant streak, which is one reason they are stronger than men. Consider for a moment which of the two sexes is more aggressive and you'll come to the conclusion that it is the woman. We know this because it was the woman who went to the tree and grabbed the fruit. It was the woman who took the fruit off the tree and ate it; and it was the woman who took the fruit to the man and gave it to him to eat.

Furthermore, we know that the woman, Ishshah, was involved with active arrogance because she was not afraid to have a conversation with Satan, who disguised himself as the most beautiful creature in the animal kingdom, the serpent. Of course, you know the rest of the story of how he talked to the woman and got her thinking, and worked on her curiosity, until finally she lusted after the one and only thing that God had forbidden. The woman was active and she was aggressive, which can be a good thing at the right time because she should take some initiative and be aggressive at times. In fact, some relationships and marriages would never get out of first gear if it weren't for the woman. So, the idea that the woman is just a little, passive thing, sitting around fanning herself and dropping her eyes, is a myth. However, in this case, she would have been wise to seek the protection of Adam and reject the conversation with Satan.

Marriage is not designed to suppress the woman's volition but rather to promote it. No woman can love a man without being free to do so. In the best marriages, the woman has the freedom to make the decisions that affect her life; she is free to make her own mistakes, and fashion her own success. While many husbands understand the principle that a wife should be subordinate or submissive, they fail to understand that her subordination is designed to respond to virtue and to both impersonal and personal love, rather than to bullying and heavy-handedness. A real man is not someone with muscle, but someone with virtue who respects his wife and supports her decisions. In fact, he respects womanhood in general. A husband never wants his wife to lose her volition, because without it she can never respond properly and willingly to him.

With that in mind, let's look at what the Scriptures have to say about the role of the husband

in marriage. The first divine rule of marriage is for the husband:

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her. (Eph 5:25)

The word for “husbands” is the Greek noun “aner” and it can mean hero, man, or virtuous man; but here, it means husbands. Paul is talking about a principle of doctrine that is related to a specific category of believers called husbands. The word for “love” is from the present-active-imperative form of the Greek verb “agapao” which is not used for personal romance or personal love, but rather for virtue love. The present tense is what we call durative, or progressive present, for an action or a state of being which began in the past and is described as continuing in the present. In other words as long as marriage is a divine institution on the earth, this principle will always apply. The active voice means that the husband produces the action of the verb, and it is his responsibility to love his wife. The love in view here is impersonal, unconditional, virtue love. Personal love must be based upon impersonal love in order to have capacity and be effective. Therefore, it is impersonal love that gives virtue, strength, merit and honor to personal love. The imperative mood is the imperative of command, which in this case, makes it a direct, positive demand on all husbands. The word for “wives” is from the noun “gune” which is the Greek word for wife or woman. The phrase “just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her” begins with an adverb of comparison, which is “kathos.” It indicates a pattern or a comparison between the dispensation of the Hypostatic Union and the Church-age.

The word for “loved” is the aorist-active-indicative of “agapao” and this is a dramatic aorist that points to the present reality with a view of the past event. God’s love for the Church-age believer is based upon two facts: First, the force of His impersonal love which led Him to accomplish the work of salvation on the Cross. Secondly, the qualification of the believer to be the recipient of personal love because he possesses imputed divine righteousness. The imputation of divine righteousness through faith in Christ is the key to understanding the precedent of the husband’s love for the wife. In fact, divine love is the pattern for all virtue love as a problem-solving device. Therefore, the husband’s responsibility is based upon his understanding of the Lord’s love for the Church. First the Lord loved with impersonal love, and then He loved with personal love. Such is the pattern for the man. The motivation that the husband must have to execute the first divine rule in marriage is the same motivation that Christ had for His Church. The Lord functions in both impersonal and personal love when it comes to His Church. The second Divine rule regarding the husband is:

Husbands, love your wives, and do not be bitter against them. (Col 3:19)

In this passage the word “husbands” comes from the vocative-plural-subject from the two Greek words, “hoi aner.” To begin, there is the generic use of the definite article hoi, which is used to emphasize husbands as a special category in the divine institution of marriage. Then aner is used for husband, but it also means nobleman. Therefore, it refers to a noble person with a sense of honor and integrity, and in essence, is saying that the man in marriage should represent the concept of nobility. Even more important than being the authority in the home, the husband should be the leader in the home.

In this reference to “love,” the present-active-imperative of the Greek verb “agapao” is used.

While the present tense means that this love should always exist, the active voice means that the husband is to produce this love, and the imperative mood makes it a command. Notice that Paul did not use the Greek word for sexual love, “*eros*,” but rather, the word for impersonal love, “*agape*.” The point is that the husband is to love her with integrity; love her with honor; and love her with virtue. If the husband does not function in impersonal love, he is thinking only of himself.

The phrase “and do not be bitter against them” sheds tremendous light on this passage. The connective conjunction “and” is the Greek word, “*kai*,” and here it indicates that this divine rule is not being fulfilled. “Bitter” is the present-middle-imperative of the Greek verb “*pikraino*,” and is best translated “embittered.” At the time Paul gave this command, the Christian husbands in Colossae were failing in their marriages because of their bitterness and arrogance, so they were warned against such attitudes. Furthermore, the present tense is a descriptive present, explaining what is now occurring. Additionally, the middle voice is an indirect middle in which the husband acts for himself [he’s bitter], by himself [he produces the action], and with something that belongs to him [his wife]. So, in this verse the husband produces the action of the verb. Finally, the imperative mood connotes a command and here it is prohibiting the man from being bitter.

Men and bitterness

To start, let’s note that if you are bitter against your wife, you cannot love her. Since bitterness takes residence in the soul, marriages are destroyed in the soul long before they are destroyed in the body. When this happens, it causes reaction and leads people to search for happiness in other areas. While many men get bitter in marriage because they don't get their way, some men become bitter because they succumb to female domination, and still others become bitter because they don't know how to handle nagging, tantrums and pouting. But by avoiding bitterness, you eliminate many problems that arise in a marital or a divorce situation. Once a man becomes bitter or jealous, he has had it. Male bitterness is a tragic thing and it is much stronger than female bitterness. A bitter man is difficult to love because the source of bitterness is arrogance and hyper-sensitivity. When this happens, his authority, his sense of responsibility and his virtue temporarily disappear. So men, no matter what happens in your marriage, do not harbor bitterness against your wife.

Every normal man has areas where he is sensitive, because all men are sensitive about something. In fact, men are much more sensitive than women because they are more prone to pride and arrogance, which leads to insecurity and hyper-sensitivity. As a result, a man can have his ego clobbered by a simple, careless word from his wife. Moreover, some ladies don't realize how their behavior makes their husbands hyper-sensitive. As the woman continues to say the wrong things, the man’s behavior pattern changes. If a woman tramples the sensitivity of her man, hopping on his short-comings and failures until his soul is stomped to bits and he is left with no self-respect, it is only a matter of time before bitterness sets in. If he becomes a drunken bum, she wonders why, not realizing that her behavior has reduced him to rubble. Of course, there is no excuse for bitterness since it is a sin whether or not it has a culprit, but this pattern is real. We are by no means excusing the man’s bitterness; we are merely pointing out that it exists.

Men and Arrogance

The arrogant man bullies his wife, and suppresses her volition; in effect he abuses his God-given authority. When a husband goes home and says to his wife, "Didn't you hear the preacher? I'm the head!" That man has no authority whatsoever. Instead, this type of man depends on flattery, praise and approbation from the so-called weaker sex, and he has no grace orientation.

Consumed with themselves, arrogant men don't realize how weak they are, making them easy prey for a woman who has learned the art of flattery as the means to easily control him. Hearing just a little bit of flattery, a little praise, a little approbation, his ego gets inflated, and he is filled with pseudo self-esteem. As such, he has been set up for the female kill, which happens when a woman feeds a man's ego and then cuts him down. At first, she idolizes the man and then, when she sees his feet of clay, she shreds him. Thus, the very idol she creates, she destroys! When flattery, praise and approbation are cut off, the man, in his passive arrogance, is deflated, discouraged, despondent and depressed. So remember two things men: first, a woman can always find something to praise, even in the worst of men, and second, a man is at his weakest when a woman is telling him how strong he is!

Principles

Let's review some principles concerning the responsibility of the man in dating, courtship and marriage:

1. The husband is the head of the home, which connotes leadership in all areas of family life. Coupled with this leadership authority is responsibility. The husband has the responsibility to love his wife; to support and protect his family; and to set the spiritual pace for the family. He does this by teaching the Word to his children; by encouraging fellowship and spiritual growth; and by setting an example of living under the principles of impersonal love, forgiveness and unselfishness. Therefore, more responsibility falls upon the husband for growing in grace, through daily perception of doctrine, than on the wife. Unfortunately, today, many husbands have no sense of responsibility or thoughtfulness, and simply refuse to take any responsibility at all.
2. The foundation for the family and for the home is the husband's love. Without this, he can expect no response from the wife.
3. When a man invests nothing in his relationship or marriage, he can expect nothing in return. The husband is commanded, as a part of his responsibility, to please his wife and to do his best to make the marriage a success.
4. The woman was made for the man, and therefore she is never complete and totally fulfilled without him. As seen, ... **the woman is the glory of man. For man does not originate from woman, but woman from man; for indeed man was not created for the woman's sake, but woman for the man's sake (1Co 11:7-9)**. The man needs to understand that the woman's desire is to feel wanted and protected. Her security is in the love of her husband, not in the money he earns or his social prestige. Above all, every woman wants to feel as though she belongs and she is needed.
5. A woman truly desires to respect her man and does not want to look at him as just another child to rear and handle. Some men want their wife to assume the role of a mother, so instead of the man giving protection to his wife, he demands it from her.

6. The man needs to understand both the female mind and the female body. God has made the female mind and the female body to respond, and when she responds mentally or physically to the man, she is the glory of the man. There are three areas the man needs to understand about the woman: Her spiritual make-up, her mental make-up, and her physical make-up.
7. Marriage works best when the man has a certain degree of maturity. Unfortunately, there are few mature men around today. There are two levels to “growing up.” First, they must grow up as people and learn to take responsibility for their decisions. Secondly, they must grow up spiritually.
8. The man must never use his authority to force his wife to change. When the husband has to stand on his authority to get his way, usually that's all he has left. When he ignores the fact that his wife also has a soul, a free will, and volition just like he does, he cannot operate in virtue, honor, or integrity. A man cannot destroy his woman's free will and then expect to receive love or respect in return. Instead, the woman must have the freedom to respond to her husband's love, for without freedom, she will not have desire. Moreover, no man has the right to bully the woman.
9. No man can exercise his authority properly as a husband without honor, integrity and virtue. Some men place an inordinate amount of importance on making the woman obey them, and they get married only to receive perpetual approbation and attention from the wife. Although he wants his wife to constantly be kind, wonderful, tender, loving and thoughtful, she is not capable of these unreasonable expectations.

To close out our discussion of the husband, here is a dissertation from a woman about men in marriage:

Men are what women marry. They have two hands and two feet, and sometimes two women, but never more than one dollar or one idea at a time. Like Turkish cigarettes, they are all made of the same material; the only difference is that some are better disguised than others. Husbands are of three types: 1) Prizes; 2) Surprises; 3) Consolation prizes.

Making a husband out of a man is one of the highest forms of plastic art known in civilization; it requires science, sculpture, common sense, faith, hope and charity...in fact mostly charity. If you flatter a man you frighten him to death, if you don't you bore him to death. If you permit him to make love with you he gets tired in the end, but if you don't, he gets tired in the beginning.

If you believe him in everything, you cease to interest him. If you argue with him, you cease to charm him. If you believe everything he tells you, he thinks you're a fool. If you don't, he thinks you're a cynic. If you are a clinging vine, he doubts if you have a brain. But if you are an intelligent woman, he doubts if you have a heart. If you are a silly, he longs for a brilliant mate. If you are intelligent and intellectual, he longs for a playmate.

Man is just a worm in the dust. He comes along, wiggles around for a while and finally, some chicken gets him.

6 The Duty of the Wife

General Considerations

There are two basic categories of women: the weak woman whose arrogance is both passive and active; and the strong woman whose virtue from truth and doctrine is expressed in an active and passive way. The weak woman, in her passive arrogance, is pre-occupied with herself. This doesn't mean that a woman shouldn't look in the mirror and spend time taking care of her appearance, because any self-improvement is always appreciated by the time the woman reaches the street. Rather, we're talking about her mental attitude; her subjective pre-occupation with self that makes it impossible for her to live in the pre-designed plan of God, and the divine mandates regarding marriage. The woman who is filled with arrogance is anti-authority, not just in the home, but everywhere. Her active arrogance is manifested by her intrusion into the privacy of others. Not only are women curious, but they can also become very nosy busy-bodies. When women become busy-bodies or gossips, they are always trying to change others to conform to their false and legalistic ideas and standards. Instead of trying to improve themselves, they are always working on someone else. That is active arrogance at work, and a woman in arrogance sees no reason for self-improvement or change. Please note that we're not talking about outward appearance or change, we're talking about inner change; about changing motivation, mental attitude, and decisions and actions. The root of all female beauty exists in the soul. There really is no such thing as an ugly woman, except the woman who is filled with arrogance.

While it is true that a man is usually attracted to the woman's overt beauty before he is drawn to her soul, this is only the beginning of the attraction stage. The true beauty of the woman is found in her soul. For the Christian woman, true inner beauty comes from living in the pre-designed plan of God, under the filling of the Spirit and with momentum from Bible doctrine. It also means the avoidance of two categories of sin: arrogant sins and emotional sins.

A woman has to overlook more in a man than a man has to overlook in the woman; that is a general truth. Since the woman has been designed to be under the authority of the man, she is built to take more. Sometimes, women have a very difficult time loving the man with whom they have been familiar for a long time, because ladies have great fantasies, and they think that the grass is always greener on the other side. Usually, the woman sees her husband unshaven, unwashed and walking around in his pajamas or underwear, which is not exactly what she classifies as romance - and all ladies have romantic thoughts. That's why soap operas in the middle of the day are so popular; they have switched their romantic thoughts from their marriage to a soap opera "hero." But ladies, remember that it's just a dream; no one can ever fit into your soap opera fantasies, and doesn't carry you anywhere.

Another area to note is that as soon as something goes wrong in the marriage, instinctively, the woman blames the man. "It's his fault," she says, and generally she has a good reason for thinking that. But the moment that a woman points to the man, she forgets that the only way to help the marriage is through virtue, and virtue is honoring the man, not discrediting him. So ladies, you cannot make an issue out of your husband's flaws, even though he has plenty of

them. Likewise, you cannot make an issue out of his sins and failures because he has plenty of those, too, but so do you. The issue must be your relationship with God, and all He has done for you.

Many women, through insecurity, have destroyed a promising relationship because they lacked assurance and confidence. In fact, some women are so jealous that they can't stand to see their man even talking to another woman. The solution is to develop impersonal, unconditional love, because once you gain the spiritual self-esteem that comes with this kind of virtue love, you will no longer feel threatened by or jealous of even his female friends. You will find that you will be able to handle any situation magnificently; you'll have that peace and relaxed mental attitude that can only be produced by the filling of the Spirit, and this will give you confidence and prevent you from thinking evil thoughts. the other hand, if you don't have impersonal, unconditional love, you will have lost any capacity you had for an honest, open relationship.

Another problem that a lot of ladies have is that they have never found a way to entertain themselves when their husband is occupied. No woman can be successful in marriage unless she has learned to entertain herself. Many women today have the "I" and "me" syndrome. Instead of emphasizing spiritual growth, and the inculcation of Bible doctrine, they expect the husband to entertain them, to initiate conversation, and to placate them. One of the reasons that women become bored is that they lack inner beauty. However, a woman who can entertain herself has inner beauty, and can handle being alone, making valuable use of the time when she is apart from her husband.

Let's look at another from the book *Husbands and Wives* a subject titled "Privacy vs. Togetherness"

There are couples who work together and still want to spend all their leisure time with each other. There are others, however, who need to get away, who find themselves becoming a bit bored even though at other times they feel terrific together. There are widely varying styles and preferences, and a good marriage can take any of them into account. The wish for privacy is one of the milestones ending the purely romantic phase of a relationship and beginning the more mature form of love.

Romance is often characterized by constant togetherness and sharing. The first time we wanted to go off by ourselves to read a book or watch television may have seemed like a violation of the romantic pact. Some men and women, when they go off like this, even wonder if their need for time alone is a sign that love is declining. Naturally, one's wish for periods of separateness has nothing to do with love or even romance. We all have our saturation point; we all need to relax and not have to perform. Unfortunately, this need for alone time is typically not discussed in marriage, as though to mention it would suggest something is wrong. Some people naively believe that to love someone we must always enjoy spending time together. This belief is patently false.

Conflict surrounding this issue often surfaces because husbands and wives are usually out of sync about being separate; one usually wants it more than the other. Usually the one who craves closeness feels more self-righteous and loving, though of course this isn't

true. The person who wants privacy does so for his or her own personal needs, not out of a lack of love or a wish to pull away. For that reason, working out the timing and duration of private times can be a bit tricky. The person wanting more privacy should not be made to feel guilty, yet that so often happens. A husband or wife who wants more privacy will be effective in negotiating it as long as he or she stays positive and affirmative rather than negative and threatening.

For example, if a wife wants more time with women friends, she can bring up the subject by telling her husband what she enjoys about these friendships rather than inadvertently implying that she wants to get away from him. Interestingly, men have traditionally exercised this right of privacy by going off to the gym, stopping by the office on the weekend, or playing in a regular poker game. Women, on the other hand, who understandably may want some privacy too, even today often encounter subtle resistance from their husbands. But regardless of who wants it, approaching one's mate on the issue with warmth and love will usually defuse any negative response. When we feel loved and secure, we tend not to be threatened by a loved one's desire for involvements away from us. Not everyone desires the same degree of openness.

Again, differences between husbands and wives should be viewed only as that, differences rather than proofs of how loving one may be. One person may desire more oneness than another, and such differences need to be tolerated and accepted rather than resented. Obviously, there should be reasonable bounds. It is unreasonable to expect to know our partner's every waking thought and feeling, but on the other hand it is hurtful for a partner never to want to talk about his or her concerns and reactions. A healthy sense of privacy and openness lies somewhere in between.

Our discomfort with our mate's need for privacy is often linked to feelings of possessiveness and sexual jealousy. Put simply, many husbands and wives are apprehensive about their mate's separate activities for fear their mate will meet someone new, exciting, and ultimately tempting. Indeed, one can argue that not allowing room for some amount of privacy in marriage can have the effect of intensifying the need for separate experiences, including those involving the opposite sex. Some degree of separation, rather than increasing the possibility of sexual infidelity, can stimulate greater interest and pleasure in marital sex.

One cause of disinterest in a relationship is a lack of novelty and a fresh perspective. If they have time away from each other, having different experiences, men and women come back and see each other in a new light. Ironically, the more slack we give our partner, the more his or her desire for and attraction to us will be heightened. Men and women who possess sufficient self-esteem, who feel complete and secure, however, will find it relatively easy to accept a certain amount of separateness. Those who are not so secure, however, will find it threatening.

Whenever we have difficulty being comfortable with our own independence, we tend to become suffocating with our mate. We fail to understand that it is our own problem to solve and not our mate's. Our discomfort may have less to do with love for our partner

than it does with a fear of being alone. It is not fair to burden our mate with our fears of aloneness and make our mate feel responsible. He or she will invariably feel constricted and want to pull away in order to get breathing room.

Nagging

There are two kinds of nags: there is the loud-mouth nag, and then there is the soft-spoken nag, but both are equally devastating. While one is obnoxious and boisterous, the other is like slow Chinese water torture. Every time a woman nags, it reveals her bitterness, arrogance and self-justification. Once a woman is locked into this mental attitude, she no longer sees her own faults and flaws, but only those of her husband. So, although the content of your nagging may be accurate, and often it is, it is not the way to promote a healthy marriage. You cannot nag a man and have a successful marriage. Additionally, nagging never advances the wife's position. For some reason, women feel as though nagging is the method to get her way, but many times this strategy backfires. Either you'll reduce your man to slavery, or you'll turn him into a neurotic, but either way, the marriage will be destroyed. Ladies remember this principle, although this applies to both men and women: you cannot change others; you can only change yourself. Also note that no woman can be a nag and have inner beauty. Likewise, no woman can be arrogant and have inner beauty. If you are jealous, bitter, vindictive, implacable, petty, and hateful, or if you nag, gossip, malign, judge, slander and criticize, you are an arrogant person. These are the warning signs, so take heed, and if you see them appearing with consistency, carefully examine yourself and make the necessary changes.

Unfortunately, some husbands are weak and they succumb to this form of abuse until they finally fold and say, "yes dear" and "no dear." Most men who give into nagging become weak and wimpy. On the other hand, some husbands simply withdraw, or even worse, they get violent. While violence against women is never justified, unfortunately, it is a fact in some marriages. By the time that a woman can change a man through nagging, it is the end of the line for the man; he is going to be under her thumb for the rest of his life, or until they divorce, whichever comes first. So, ladies remember that you cannot change the man for the better by nagging, and if he is hit hard enough by your nagging, he will desert you, either physically, emotionally, mentally or all three.

Eventually most women give up nagging the man for the purpose of changing him. Notice I didn't say that they give up nagging; I just said that they give up nagging for the purpose of changing him. Instead, she merely opens up her mouth to badger her husband just for the sport of it. Listen to what the book of Proverbs says about a nagging woman:

A constant dripping on a rainy day and a nagging woman are alike. (Pro 27:15)

A foolish son is destruction to his father, and the nagging wife is a constant dripping. (Pro 19:13)

It is better to live in a corner of a roof, than in a mansion shared with a nagging woman. (Pro 21:9)

It is better to live in a desert than with a nagging woman. (Pro 21:19)
The Wife's Duty in Marriage

The rules directed toward women in marriage revolve around two main principles: respect and obedience. These themes occur in three passages in the Epistles: twice in Paul's and once in Peter's. We will begin with Paul.

Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church... (Eph 5:22-23)

The Greek word for "wives" is from the word "gune" and it generally means woman, but here it means wife. The plural form indicates that no particular wife is being selected or pointed out. The phrase "be subject to your own husbands" actually contains no verb because the verb "be subject" is taken from the previous verse, under one of the rules of ellipsis. Ellipsis is defined as the omission from the sentence of a word or words that would complete the grammatical construction. Hence, ellipsis expresses an idea that is not fully expressed grammatically. Here, it refers to the verb "hupotasso" that is used in verse 21, but is not repeated in verse 22. The word "hupotasso" means to obey, and to give respect; and in this verse, in ellipsis it functions as the present-middle-imperative form of the verb. This is a progressive present tense used for an action in a state of persistence, meaning "keep on being subject." The middle voice is used to describe the wife as participating in the results of the action of the verb and benefiting from that. The imperative mood used here makes this a command. Wives are to be subject to their own husbands, giving them respect and obedience. This is not authority being demanded, but authority that should be given out of respect. Furthermore, it has the connotation of voluntary recognition of authority, not enforced authority. Therefore, the man is not to lord it over his wife. Remember ladies, you said "I do" entering the marriage of your own free will and subjecting yourself to the authority of your husband.

The phrase "as to the Lord" refers to the manner in which she must approach problems that arise in marriage; she is to live as unto the Lord. The wife, therefore, must be consistent in character, integrity and virtue in order to put up with the inconsistencies of the man, because it takes humility and virtue in order to give the man respect. One of the important keys for success in any marriage is the virtue of the woman. If the woman has virtue, there are high odds that the marriage will succeed. A wife who rejects the authority of her husband as the head of the house rejects the authority of Christ as the head of her life. It is one thing to recognize the authority of Christ, but it's another to actually respect that authority. Respect for the Lord and His authority is demonstrated by a woman's attitude toward Bible doctrine; that is, her daily attitude toward doctrine. As noted in the book of Proverbs, "**charm is deceitful and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the LORD, she shall be praised**" (Pro 31:30).

So, this leads to a principle that applies to both wives and husbands: although the authority of Christ exists, not all believers accept His authority. Believers who truly respect the authority and the Lordship of Christ are the ones who are advancing to maturity and have the desire and motivation to live a life that brings glory to God.

Continuing with the subject of respect and obedience on the part of the wife, Paul also noted:

For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church... (Eph 5:23)

“For the husband is the head of the wife” means that he has the authority even though he hasn't earned or deserved it, because it was given to him by Divine decree. So regardless of whether it is a good or a bad marriage, there must be the principle of authority. So it is that when there are two people in an organization, one has to have the authority and take the responsibility for policy. In the case of marriage, we know that the man receives the authority because **“man was not created for the woman's sake, but woman for the man's sake” (1Co 11:9).**

The phrase “as Christ also is the head of the church” tells us something about the role of men in marriage. It is an awesome responsibility to be identified with the Lord. It is being identified with the love, virtue and humility the Lord possessed. Whether your wife is a witch or a saint, she is to be loved unconditionally. Given this, ladies, it's because of the Lord that you respect your husband; it is not necessarily because he is worthy of respect.

Now, let's take a look at the second passage of Paul that relates to the role of the woman in marriage. Although this is a repetition from the passage in Ephesians, it is well worth noting again:

Wives, be subject to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. (Col 3:18)

The word for “wives” is derived from the Greek word “gune,” and it refers to the female. This is to indicate the category of woman in the human race. In this passage, Paul is talking about the woman as a wife. The phrase “be subject” is the present-middle-imperative of the verb “hupotasso,” and it means to submit, but in the middle voice, which is used here, it means to voluntarily render obedience. Note that voluntary recognition of authority is respect, but enforced authority is fear; and true love cannot function under fear. The man who demands that the woman become a slave is never going to make it because he's a loser. In order to succeed, you have to enter marriage with genuine humility. The present tense is a progressive present for action in a state of persistence. However, this could also be a tendential present, called conative present, which is used for an action that is being proposed, but is not yet occurring. The middle voice is used to describe the subject, the wife, acting in relationship to herself. Again, the imperative mood makes this a command. Notice, ladies, that it doesn't say keep loving your man; but rather keep respecting him or obeying him. As we've already stated, this can only be done with impersonal, virtue love. If this is done, then your personal love for him will not waver because there's virtue in you, and as previously stated, if the woman has virtue, then there are high odds that the marriage will succeed. The only way to develop the virtue and the power necessary to respect your husbands is through a positive attitude toward Bible doctrine, as well as the daily intake of doctrine; that is, everyday!

The phrase “as is fitting in the Lord” illustrates that it is personal love for the Lord that develops what the woman needs to respect her husband, since it will give the woman the motivation needed to operate with integrity in the marriage. With it, the woman can solve most of her marital problems. With motivational virtue, the wife will be able to put up with anything, even a monster.

While some women may take offense at Paul's message, it should be taken seriously, because it is reiterated by Peter and as such, we must recognize that God the Holy Spirit meant for us to learn it. With that, let's examine what Peter had to say regarding marriage:

In the same way, you wives, be submissive to your own husbands so that even if any of them are disobedient to the Word, they may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives, as they observe your chaste and respectful behavior. And let not your adornment be merely external-- braiding the hair, and wearing gold jewelry, or putting on dresses. (1Pe 3:1-3)

Notice the first four words in verse 1: "In the same way." This phrase refers to the last verse given in 1Pe 2, where we have the subject being the guardian of your souls: **"For you were continually straying like sheep, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls" (1Pe 2:25)**. In effect, Peter is saying that while the Lord Jesus Christ is the guardian of the soul in the spiritual realm, the husband is the guardian of the wife's soul in the marital realm, and that's what is meant when he says, "in the same way."

"Be submissive [or render obedience] to your own husband" is impossible for a wife who harbors arrogance or emotionalism. Rather, it is with the imperishable quality of a gentle, or humble spirit, that the wife is to honor her commitment; and this comes from doctrine, and the humility that is produced by the filling of the Spirit. Women must have humility because that's divine rule number two for the wife; obey your husband. So, ladies, before you get married, you better be certain that you are willing to obey your intended for the rest of your life! When you do get married and find out you have a husband who is a monster, think back and recall that you used your own free will to marry that person. So, note the principle that the decisions you make determine the life that you live.

The phrase "they may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives" does not mean without the Word of God, but rather, it means without nagging. It is the behavior of the wife that will have more effect on her man than any of her words. Remember that we previously noted that nagging never advances the wife's cause, but her manner of life does.

Another interesting point brought out in this verse contradicts the world's view that what you need in your relationship or marriage is more communication. This passage reveals the fallacy of that, and instead teaches that wives should be quiet, and by their behavior win over their husbands. Today, there is a tremendous emphasis on communication in relationships for resolving problems, especially marital problems. Counselors are constantly telling husbands and wives to lay it all out and tell their true feelings; but that's all just nonsense. Communication is only a problem-solving device in a monologue; and by monologue, I mean only when the monologue is the teaching of Bible doctrine from the spiritual gift of a pastor-teacher.

The phrase "as they observe your chaste or blameless and respectful behavior" indicates that as the husband observes the chaste and respectful behavior of the wife, he is moved because he sees the love of God in her. It is the respect of the woman that allows the man to see her true or inner beauty. The woman's influence on her man is far greater through respect than anything else

in life, and it is by far her strongest and greatest virtue. In other words, the best way to a man's heart is not through his stomach, but through giving him respect.

The phrase “and let not your adornment be merely external-- braiding the hair, and wearing gold jewelry, or putting on dresses” explains that the woman’s beauty should not come from external appearance only. Just because a woman is a Christian does not mean that she has to neglect her outer appearance. Some women think that they are holy because they omit make-up or wear plain clothes, but there is nothing wrong with those things. Wearing make-up has nothing to do with the spiritual life, being a matter of personal taste. Therefore, the outer appearance is not a spiritual issue; no, the true spiritual issue is inner beauty. A woman can be beautiful on the outside, but if she doesn't have inner beauty, she has nothing. So this passage speaks of external adornment, a spiritual woman does not neglect good taste and her outer appearance. However, she has something far greater than overt beauty, and that is the loveliness of her soul. Therefore, a woman can be physically beautiful, but ugly because she lacks inner attractiveness. The principle: inner beauty animates external beauty.

Moreover, if there's one group of individuals who should not neglect their overt appearance it is wives. A pleasing, attractive appearance plus inner beauty are irresistible to the husband. That's what this verse is saying; there should be good taste reflecting the wife’s inner splendor.

The woman's inner beauty includes:

1. Being filled with the Holy Spirit
2. Grace Orientation
3. Doctrinal Orientation
4. A sense of her destiny and place in life
5. Personal Love for God the Father
6. Impersonal Love for all Mankind
7. Sharing the Happiness of God
8. Occupation with the person of Christ

We continue in 1Pe 3 with “**But let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious in the sight of God**” (1Pe 3:4). This verse brings us right back to the woman's relationship with God. The wife fulfills her responsibility to her husband from the source of metabolized doctrine. Also, a humble and quiet spirit refers to the woman whose failures have nothing to do with arrogance and indicates the absence of and freedom from jealousy. It means that there is no bitterness, no vindictiveness, no tantrums, no anger, no hatred, no self-pity, no revenge motivation and no nagging.

Let’s examine some of the principles brought out by these passages:

1. Every female member of the royal family of God¹ should be and can be beautiful. A woman is a woman because of what she is in her soul.
Inner beauty from a right relationship with God is the motivation for the woman's response.
Women are responders. This does not mean that she stands around waiting for her man to initiate so that she can respond.

In fact, when a woman is responding to a man, she is demonstrating her own aggressiveness and this is when she is at her best. Therefore, whatever a woman

¹ A royal family is the family of a king; here our Lord Jesus Christ is divine royalty as God. After His resurrection, ascension, and session He was given His third royal title, King of kings, and Lord of lords, Rev 19:16. The Church now becomes the kings and lords that He is King and Lord over. At the moment of salvation every Church-age believer is adopted as an adult son or daughter into the royal family of God, Eph 1:5. The royal family of God, therefore, is defined as every Church-age believer, regardless of background, race, social standing, or any other human factor.

becomes as a result of responding is good.

3. Whatever a woman becomes as a result of reacting is bad. Just as responding is a positive factor, reacting is a negative factor.
4. Women respond to manliness, that is, the man with virtue. The Lord was the manliest person who ever lived and women responded to His manliness. He was very tender and compassionate toward women and as a result, they responded to him and learned doctrine, so much so that most of the mature believers who followed Him were women.
5. 1Co 11:7 teaches that the woman is the most beautiful when she is responding to the man she loves. She is so occupied with the man that all the other things in life become insignificant and do not disturb her dedication and commitment to her husband.
6. There is nothing wrong with a woman making herself look beautiful. Making yourself overtly beautiful just means making the most of what you have.
7. Clothes, jewelry and hairstyle do not make the woman; the woman with inner beauty makes these things. There are some women who buy at discount stores and they look as though they have been shopping at some high-class boutique.

Inner beauty refers to the condition of a woman's soul. When a woman has a beautiful soul, it is because it is clothed with doctrine. When a woman has a maximum amount of doctrine in her soul, she knows how to present herself. You'll never see a woman who is mature that doesn't know how to cover her body in the proper way.

The Good Wife

No woman can respond to her husband's authority without humility, integrity and virtue, and so we are told **“an excellent wife or a woman with virtue is the crown of her husband” (Pro 12:4a)**. Therefore, virtue in a woman makes the man a king. He wears a crown, and the crown he wears is his wife; he is a king and she is, not his queen, but rather, his kingdom!

Now, contrast that with the second half of the verse which says, **“but, [in contrast to the virtuous woman], she who shames him [causes frustration and disappointment], she is as rottenness in his bones” (Pro 12:4b)**. Just as cancer destroys the bones, so a woman can destroy a man. When a woman truly loves a man, she will guide, and protect his soul. She will love her man, and respond to him while developing a soul-relationship that will protect him, and she will not let others step on him, or put him down. Instead, she stands up for him, and forms a protection for his soul. In her protection, the love of her husband toward her becomes a fantastic thing.

Every man has a destiny, and when he gets married his destiny must continue. In marriage, the woman's life must center on the man, and not the other way around. The weak woman will

often cut off the man's destiny because it doesn't please her and she couldn't care less. Now, if the woman has virtue and humility, she will respond to her man in obedience, and this requires two things: consistent filling of the Holy Spirit and consistent perception of doctrine resulting in spiritual momentum. So we now turn to that famous passage that describes the good wife. While the entire passage is given here, we will only cover some of the verses in depth:

An excellent wife, who can find? For her worth is far above jewels. The heart of her husband trusts in her, and he will have no lack of gain. She does him good and not evil all the days of her life. She looks for wool and flax, and works with her hands in delight. She is like merchant ships; she brings her food from afar. She rises also while it is still night, and gives food to her household, and portions to her maidens. She considers a field and buys it; from her earnings she plants a vineyard. She girds herself with strength, and makes her arms strong. She senses that her gain is good; her lamp does not go out at night. She stretches out her hands to the distaff, and her hands grasp the spindle. She extends her hand to the poor; and she stretches out her hands to the needy. She is not afraid of the snow for her household, for all her household are clothed with scarlet. She makes coverings for herself; her clothing is fine linen and purple. Her husband is known in the gates, when he sits among the elders of the land. She makes linen garments and sells them, and supplies belts to the tradesmen. Strength and dignity are her clothing, and she smiles at the future. She opens her mouth in wisdom, and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue. She looks well to the ways of her household, and does not eat the bread of idleness. Her children rise up and bless her; her husband also, and he praises her, saying: "Many daughters have done nobly, but you excel them all." Charm is deceitful and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the LORD, she shall be praised. Give her the product of her hands, and let her works praise her in the gates. (Pro 31:10-31)

Verses 10-31 are an acrostic, which in the Hebrew is simply a poem or other text in alphabetical order upon a certain subject. Each verse represents an important fact and starts off with a letter in the Hebrew alphabet. There are 22 letters and therefore, from verses 10-31, we have 22 verses.

An excellent wife, who can find? For her worth is far above jewels. (Pro 31:10)

Verse 10 is the aleph file; aleph means ox in the Hebrew, and represents prosperity. We say "file" because it expresses the way the teachers in ancient Israel would teach the acrostic. The Hebrew letter stood for all of the information contained within the verse. The theme of Proverbs 31 is revealed by one question in verse 10 that Bathsheba asked her son, Solomon: "... an excellent wife who can find?" While excellent means virtue or integrity, in this verse it means capacity. So the corrected translation would be "a woman of capacity, who can find?" Such a woman is a gift of grace from the Lord Jesus Christ to the man. Not only is she the woman that God intended for that man, but she is also the one that has the capacity to love that man. Therefore, the greatest prosperity that the man and woman can have in this life is finding each other.

When Solomon took over the throne, he did so as a bachelor, and so it was imperative that he find the woman that God had intended for him. His mother, Bathsheba, knew all about this

principle, not only through Bible doctrine, but also through her experience with David. During his lifetime, David experienced seven great failures, all of which took place either before Bathsheba became his wife, or as a result of negative decisions previous to his marriage with Bathsheba. We are going to briefly recount them here:

1. In 1Sa 21:1-10, David willfully sinned and lied and, as a result, the entire city of Nob was wiped out. While you may tell a lie by which people get hurt, David told a lie and a whole city was destroyed.
2. Then in 1Sa 2:11-18, he “faked madness” and gave the Philistines the false impression that he was crazy. As a result, hundreds died. Also, there was a time when thousands were killed in battle because David pretended to be crazy in the city of Gath.
3. In 2Sa 11, David failed in his responsibilities. He should have led his troops in battle, but instead, he stayed home in Jerusalem and as a result there was disaster on the battlefield.
4. Moreover, this led to disaster on the home front as well. While he was lounging around the house, his inactivity led him to commit some ugly sins; he committed adultery, and then to cover it up, he committed murder (2Sa 11:2-27).
5. In 2Sa 6:1-13, he did not honor the Word of God. He purposely disobeyed God’s command about the handling of the ark and men were killed as a result.
6. In 1Ch 21, David rejected the promises of God and questioned God. Joab, his chief of staff, warned him about his unbelief, but David persisted and 10,000 people died.
7. He failed to completely forgive his son, Absalom. Although David was oriented to grace better than almost anyone in life, he failed to use grace in regard to one he loved dearly.

Nevertheless, David didn't let his sins and failures keep him down; instead, he always rebounded and kept moving forward. With his many failures as a believer, it was not until David met one certain woman that he began to straighten out. After he married Bathsheba, we no longer read about him marrying anyone else, or making any major mistakes. What this reveals is the principle of what finding the right woman can mean to a man. Take note, men: there are certain things that your woman will have for you that no other woman can give!

When Bathsheba said to Solomon in verse 10, “an excellent wife, who can find, for her worth is far above jewels?” she knew what she was talking about, and she was teaching her son how to recognize his right woman. Notice overt beauty is never mentioned.

The heart of her husband trusts in her, and he will have no lack of gain. (Pro 31:11)

Next, in verse 11, there is the beth file, which represents a house. “The heart of her husband” means that the woman is to become a “home for the man.” That is, his heart has a home, which is the soul of his wife and the two souls are to be at rest with each other. “Husband” is from the Hebrew word “baal,” and it means lord and master. Therefore, when a woman becomes a wife, this is how she should regard her husband.

“Trust” is from the Hebrew word “batach” which means to put or have confidence in her. So he has the confidence that she will be faithful and protect his soul, which he has placed in her care. This is called love security of the soul. Because of this, he will have no lack of gain; he will

not be without or be in want. Therefore, the beth file teaches that the “soul of the woman is the home for the man.” This leads us to the principle that the more doctrine the woman has, the better house she prepares for her man.

She does him good and not evil all the days of her life. (Pro 31:12)

In verse 12, we have the gimel file. This letter represented a camel, and in the ancient world camels would bring exotic and costly merchandise from miles away that would please people. So the gimel file is the pleasure file. Just like the camel would bring great gifts, the woman brings pleasure and blessing to her man.

The phrase “she does him good and not evil” can be further broken down. The word for “does” in the Hebrew is “gamal” in the Hebrew, and it means to do, to show, or to cause something to happen. Hence, the wife will cause something to happen to him; and in this verse, we see that she does him good, she shows him good, and she causes good to fall upon him. Continuing, we know that she does this “all the days of her life.” Because she is a woman with virtue, she is there for him every day.

She looks for wool and flax, and works with her hands in delight. (Pro 31:13)

Verse 13 is the *daleth* file, which represents a door, and it refers to the positive decisions that the good wife constantly makes. Day in and day out she makes the right decisions; and it is all to please her man.

In the phrase, “she looks for wool and flax,” “she looks” is the Hebrew word “darash” which means to search for, or to make decisions to search. The items that she searched for were wool and flax, which were materials used to make clothes. While the wool was for the cold weather, the flax was for the warm weather. In the ancient world, all the women made their own clothes, and this is a reference to the clothes she wore. She diligently searched for clothing that pleased her man. Notice that she didn’t dress to please or impress other women or other men; she was concerned about only one man.

The next part of the verse, “and works with her hands in delight,” illustrates that she worked with pleasure. When she cleans and dusts or changes diapers, she works with pleasure; when she works at her job, or in an office, she works with pleasure. To her, the details of life and the mundane things become a source of contentment.

She is like merchant ships; she brings her food from afar. (Pro 31:14)

Verse 14 is the heh file, which is the fifth letter in the Hebrew alphabet, and here it represents a window. The window symbolizes the wife’s perspective of life, or how she views life. She associates life with him. “She is like merchant ships” because just as merchant ships would go on long journeys to find unique and different things, so she puts extra effort into seeking out food that is pleasing to her man. The wife doesn’t spend her time picking out frozen dinners for him. The phrase “She brings her food from afar” [or from a distant place] refers to the effort she puts into loving her man and satisfying his desire for his favorite food. She goes all out to please him.

She rises also while it is still night, and gives food to her household, and portions to her maidens. (Pro 31:15)

Verse 15 is the vau [wow] file, which is the sixth letter in the Hebrew alphabet. This refers to a peg, nail, or a hook. This describes the woman as the peg and nail on which the household hangs. When a woman is not right, the whole house is affected, and nothing goes right.

The phrase “she rises also while it is still night” speaks of the woman who gets up early every morning to prepare her family for the day. It is an indication of the tremendous mental attitude of the wife; she gets up with a purpose. Many women sleep because they have no purpose and they have no purpose because they have no capacity. Instead, this woman places her love for her husband above her personal comfort. So, ladies, when you find a man who is more important to you than your personal comfort, he is the man for you.

The phrase “and gives food to her household and portions to her maidens” explains that she gets up early and loses comfort because she oversees the household and assigns chores to them. While the man is the head of the house, the wife is the key to the running of the house and she is the center around which the household revolves.

She considers a field and buys it; from her earnings she plants a vineyard. (Pro 31:16)

Verse 16 is the zain [zah-yin] file from the seventh letter of the Hebrew alphabet. Zain represents a sword or a weapon. In this case it represents aggressiveness. All women are designed to be responders, but even in response, there is aggressiveness. Here we have a representation of the woman in business.

In the phrase, “she considers a field and buys it,” considers is from the Hebrew word “zaman,” and it means to consider a business proposition. The point is that not all women are the household type. This principle goes as far back as the ancient world when, even then, women worked. There is absolutely nothing wrong with a woman working unless her husband does not want her to.

“Buys it” is the Hebrew word, *laqach*, which means to violently or aggressively take or seize. In other words, she saw a good business deal and she aggressively pursued it.

“From her earnings” is a reference to her capital, not her husbands; it is from what she has earned. “She plants a vineyard” simply means that she invests her money wisely.

She girds herself with strength and makes her arms strong. (Pro 31:17)

Verse 17 is the cheth file from the eighth letter of Hebrew alphabet, and it represents a fence or an enclosure. As given here, it means that it doesn’t matter if she is a business woman or housewife, she is enclosed in a fenced-in area. This indicates that whether she is at home all day or in the business world, she is surrounded by only one man and he is a fence around her soul and body.

To “gird,” from the phrase, “she girds herself with strength” is derived from the Hebrew word “charag,” and it means to encircle or to equip. “And makes her arms strong” does not

mean that she is a weight lifter. Instead, it means that she encourages her husband with her arms; that is her embrace and her love makes him strong.

She senses that her gain is good; her lamp does not go out at night. (Pro 31:18)

Verse 18 is the teth file which comes from the ninth letter of the Hebrew alphabet. It represents relationship or association.

“She senses that her gain is good” does not refer to her weight or mean that she is on an ego trip! Rather, it means that anytime she can complement and satisfy her man, she is content and fulfilled.

“Her lamp does not go out at night” can be broken down further. “Go out” is *kabah* in the Hebrew and it means not to be extinguished. So the lamp illustrates her prosperity and happiness, which does not go away during difficult times.

“At night” refers to adversity, difficulties and times of disaster. The virtuous woman anticipates certain kinds of disaster and heads them off. Therefore, long before disaster arises, she learns to make provisions for it. Her instinct of love toward her man helps her to head off many calamities.

Now, we are going to jump down to verse 22:

She makes coverings for herself; her clothing is fine linen and purple. (Pro 31:22)

Verse 22 is the mem file, and signifies water, or the sexual relationship between the man and the woman. This is a picture of the woman making herself attractive for the man and also refers to the clothing of her body and her soul.

Since “coverings” in the phrase “she makes coverings for herself” refers to a pillow or pillows, it indicates that she makes the bed in her house the most comfortable, beautiful, luxurious item of furniture in the entire household. Rightly, the bed and the bedroom ought to be the best place in the entire house.

“Her clothing is fine linen and purple” represents wearing beautiful clothing for her man. Therefore, this verse teaches that the female who turns into a fantastic woman dresses to please her man and decorates her bedroom to please him. She makes the bed as beautiful as possible, just as she makes herself as beautiful as possible. She doesn’t dress up for anyone else; she dresses up for her husband. And, between his wife and the bedroom, this man has a kingdom worth having.

Her husband is known in the gates, when he sits among the elders of the land. (Pro 31:23)

Verse 23 is the nun file, and represents a fish, and in the ancient world, the fish represented concentration. This verse speaks of the husband who can concentrate on his job and his calling because he has the total backing of his wife at home. The principle: the wrong woman distracts

the man from his profession and calling, while the right woman is an asset.

“Her husband is known in the gates, when he sits among the elders of the land” refers to his occupation and the fact that he is good at what he does because he can concentrate on his profession.

Now, skip down to verse 25:

Strength and dignity are her clothing, and she smiles at the future. (Pro 31:25)

Verse 25 is the ain file and it is the sixteenth letter of the Hebrew alphabet. This file refers to a fountain or an eye. The emphasis here is on the glory of her soul and the confidence that she has from being loved properly and being handled properly. Also, it refers to her fantastic sense of humor and the fact that she’s fun to be with.

“Strength” is *oz* (odz) in the Hebrew and it means stability, strength, glory, majesty or splendor. One Hebrew scholar says that it means “to have power over the details of life and its problem circumstances”. Here, her strength comes from stability, and stability is the result of a right relationship with her husband. On the other hand, instability in marriage is the result of a wrong relationship with the man.

“Dignity” is *chadar* in the Hebrew, and it means glamour and ornamentation. The whole point of this verse is to emphasize the beauty of the wife’s soul. Inner beauty and dignity of soul are her clothing.

“Smiles” is the Hebrew word *sachaq*, and it means laughter based on relaxation (not silliness). The future represents the next day. So the passage says that this wife will laugh at whatever the next day may bring, because she is totally satisfied with her life and her man.

She opens her mouth in wisdom, and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue. (Pro 31:26)

Verse 26 is the pe file, the nineteenth letter of the Hebrew alphabet, which represents the mouth. As such, it deals with the verbal conversation of the man and the woman and, as we know, communication is very important to the health of a marriage. Not only is she beautiful to him, but also, she pours out her soul to him when she speaks.

“She opens her mouth in wisdom” means that she speaks for the purpose of edifying her man and family, by which her wisdom is revealed. “Wisdom” is *chakmah* in the Hebrew and it means doctrine resident in the soul.

“Kindness” is from the Hebrew word *chesedh*, and it means grace. On her tongue she has the doctrine of grace and it keeps her from silly talk and gossip.

To end our discussion of the woman in marriage on a lighter note, let’s look at some observations from a mineralogist about women:

The woman has an atomic weight of 120 plus pounds. She boils at nothing, freezes at any minute, melts when treated properly, and turns bitter if not well used. She possesses great affinity for gold, silver, platinum and precious stones. She has a violent reaction when left alone. She is able to absorb great amounts of food matter, and turns green when placed beside a better-looking specimen. She is useful as a tonic in the acceleration of low spirits. She is an equalizer in the distribution of wealth and the most effective income reducing agent. Caution, she is highly explosive in inexperienced hands!

7 Why Marriages and Relationships

As we begin this subject, let's note some basic principles that pertain to failures in marriages:

1. Marital problems are symptoms, but the disease is the old sin nature, which resides in all of us and is the reason for all human failures in life. Therefore, solutions to marital problems are never permanent because people are not perfect.
2. Marriages fail because people are failures as human beings. It's not the failure of marriage as an institution, but the failure of the people in the marriage. So, don't think there's a perfect person for you; there is however the right person for you.
3. Marriage is not designed for happiness but rather for virtue, because virtue is the source of happiness, not marriage. The couples that conform to biblical standards and apply doctrine to every facet of their lives are content with each other.
4. People who marry to find happiness never find it in marriage; they merely complicate their lives. Marriage is not a solution to anything.
5. You cannot change the other person in marriage; you can only change yourself. Most people want to change the other person and mold them into something else. This seldom works and usually leads to implacability on the part of both partners. Most losers in marriage try to solve marital problems by changing their spouse to conform to their standards. If that does not work, they change spouses.
6. Marital counseling is a waste of time. All it does is give people personal attention and personal opinions rather than Bible doctrine. Therefore, a pastor should not get involved with marital counseling because he doesn't have all the facts, even though he may have answers.
7. Do not approach marital problems from the standpoint of subjectivity because you must be objective. In marriage, there are two souls and two free wills, so one should never disregard the concerns, desires and dreams of the other.
8. Marital problems should never be made public. It is no one else's business, so they should be solved in private. People with problems tend to talk to and listen to anyone, which leads only to getting bad advice from cosmic viewpoint.
9. The only solution for believers in marriage is spiritual growth, and there's no growth without the perception, metabolization and application of Bible doctrine. The real answer to marital problems is the couple's daily attitude toward doctrine. Instability in doctrinal intake means instability in marriage; especially important are the doctrines of virtue and humility. These two doctrines could solve many problems that arise in a marriage. So, ask yourself how high doctrine is on your scale of values.
10. It is important for each person to handle his or her own personal problems before, during and after marriage. If you cannot deal with your own problems, then you will not be able to deal with the problems in your marriage. Likewise, if you have no personal sense of responsibility, then you will not be able to be responsible for a mate and a marriage.
11. Never manipulate your mate by making them feel guilty for real or alleged neglect. Guilt is a terrible system of sin.
12. Do not motivate attention through pity. This is motivating others through making them

feel sorry for you. If you are building your relationships and marriage on getting others to feel sorry for you, then you have nothing.

There are basically three great enemies of marriage and all have to do with the emotion: jealousy, bitterness and anger. All three are basically born of the same great sin of arrogance. Arrogance never travels alone; it demands total attention from everyone in its periphery, and it is one of the leading causes of failure in marriage. If the perfect marriage crumbled because of arrogance, then just think of what it will do to imperfect marriages. What really hurts a marriage more than problems with money, adultery, unfaithfulness, or anything else is arrogance.

Arrogance

Arrogance produces irrational self-deception, which in turn spawns fear, worry, anxiety, and unhappiness. Unfortunately, some people have a great capacity for unhappiness, and they can only complain and grumble about life. But beware, because the more you develop your capacity for unhappiness, the less chance you will have for any happiness in this life. Because of arrogance, you lose track of who you really are. With loss of personality identity, you fall into a total state of fear so that you begin to retreat from any form of reality. At that point, the only hope is to begin to function under the perception, metabolization and application of Bible doctrine. This is the only thing that can remove the arrogance, self-deception, and the retreat from reality that make it impossible for God's grace to break through in your life. You cannot be arrogant and function inside the pre-designed plan of God.

Since arrogance is one of the greatest causes of failure in both life and marriage, it also contributes to the cause of one of the first and greatest difficulties people have after marriage, which is unrealistic expectations. Unrealistic expectations are a part of the arrogance complex, leading to a state of unhappiness and preoccupation with self. It means that very few people are loved the way that they want to be loved, and very few people are treated the way that they want to be treated. Having this attitude when entering marriage results in nothing but disaster. When people reject doctrine, they tend to expect too much from other people; this is a sure sign that they have their eyes on people, not on Christ.

In marriage, the believer who is not loved the way he wants to be loved, or treated the way he wants to be treated, becomes frustrated and reacts towards his spouse. He blames everyone else for his miserable circumstances, never taking the responsibility for decisions, and always transferring the blame to anyone in his periphery. This changes the person's personality and often creates an atmosphere of gloom. As the saying goes, misery loves company, and all too often, one miserable person creates another miserable person.

Another problem after marriage is role-model arrogance. This is when one spouse assigns a certain role to the other spouse before the marriage and then, when the spouse does not turn out to be what was expected the spouse who assigned the expectations becomes angry and frustrated. Usually, this is why people try to change their spouse; why wives nag their husbands and why husbands bully their wives. We expect others to be perfect, or to fit into our unrealistic expectations, and at the same time, we have a role-model standard for ourselves. That is, we see ourselves unrealistically, just as we see others unrealistically.

This is the function of arrogant subjectivity. In role-model arrogance, a husband may excuse himself for his sins, failures, and flaws, all the while condemning his wife for the same sins, failures, and flaws. When a husband makes a role model out of his wife, and then she does not meet his unrealistic standards, he judges her for her failure to fulfill his unrealistic expectations. While being guilty of many things himself, he blames his wife. The wife does the same thing to her husband by assigning to him the role model of the perfect husband or father. In the end, all this does is cause the accusing spouse to be a hypocrite and the other spouse a victim.

Arrogance always exaggerates unrealistic expectations into illusions, and from illusions come hallucinations. During the attraction stage of romance, an idol is often created. The arrogant believer takes an attractive person and, from delusion, idealism, or romantic illusion, creates an idol of perfection. Then, he or she thinks that they are marrying this idol of perfection that they have created in their own imagination. However, once the person's flaws emerge, the spouse seeks to destroy the idol that he or she has created. This is iconoclastic arrogance, which is total divorcement from reality in human relationships. It is defined as subjective preoccupation with other people resulting in disenchantment and disillusion. Iconoclastic arrogance is unrealistic expectation because it assigns perfection to another without taking cognizance of the fact that all of us have old sin natures. Iconoclastic arrogance rejects all problem-solving devices when the only solution is, of course, doctrine!

Bitterness

To be bitter means to be caustic, or sarcastic, and to have pain in the mind causing painful inward affliction. Bitterness is a reaction, an expression of misery and disappointment, but more importantly, bitterness is a sin. It is what causes people to search for happiness in other areas. You cannot be bitter toward anyone or anything without malfunction in your life. You cannot entertain bitterness for a second, because it will destroy a marriage, or any other relationship for that matter. No born again believer who harbors bitterness in his or her heart can have a successful marriage. In fact, marriages are destroyed by bitterness long before they are ever destroyed by adultery. To the extent that you are bitter about anything in life, yourself, your health, your wealth or lack of it, or about the way you're being treated, to that extent you will fail in your relationships in life. Again, I cannot stress enough how much emotional sin has to do with the destruction of relationships and marriage.

Should you harbor bitterness, you have a very serious spiritual problem that is not correctable apart from personal love for God and impersonal love for all mankind. Every believer who harbors bitterness is a walking time bomb waiting to explode. Once the believer uses his volition to allow bitterness, anger and jealousy to control him, he shatters his spiritual life and defiles others, as well as himself. As a result, he has no capacity for life, and having no capacity for life, he has no capacity for love. Although there are different kinds of bitterness, they all lead to malfunction in the Christian life. It is impossible to be bitter toward anyone or anything without it causing a breakdown in your life. Bitterness leads to selfishness, lack of consideration of others, withdrawal from society and indifferent social behavior. Furthermore, bitterness is so obvious that even strangers can spot it. In some cases, it is so bad that people avoid those who

are so afflicted, because bitterness produces a complaining attitude and no one likes to be around a complainer. If there's anything that wipes out Christians, and is a sign of their terrible self-centeredness, it's bitterness.

The only solution for bitterness is a proper relationship with the Lord, which must come before anything else in life. The book of Hebrews offers one of the best warnings against bitterness, **“See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by it many be defiled” (Heb 12:15)**. Operating in the full grace of God is protection for the believer in all aspects of life, especially in the area of relationships. Therefore, let's endeavor to live by the principle that the apostle Paul taught, **“Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you along with all malice. And be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you” (Eph 4:31-32)**.

Jealousy

Let's look at an emotion that really gives some insight into why relationships are so easily destroyed – jealousy. Jealousy is described in the Word of God as a state of anxiety or a trait that is a sin. It is a self-destructive mental attitude, and a system of thinking from the cosmic system. Therefore, it is diametrically opposed to doctrine. Often, it creates instability and disorder in the life of the believer because when a person is jealous, he is contentious on the one hand and arrogant on the other hand. Jealousy is older than the human race, because it existed in eternity past when Lucifer, the son of the morning became envious of God and led a revolution against Him. The first case of jealousy in the human race surfaced when Cain became jealous of his brother Abel and, of course, this is what motivated Cain to murder his brother. The same principle is true today; jealousy motivates antagonistic behavior, including murder. As such, jealousy is one of the worst of all the mental attitude sins, because it goes hand in hand with the first and greatest sin, the sin of pride: **“Wrath is fierce; and anger is a flood; but who can stand before jealousy?” (Pro 27:4)**. Jealousy is one of the major sins that hinder a person from fulfilling God's plan, God's will and God's purpose for his life. It is manifested in the believer who succumbs to temptation and then blames others for his failures. Furthermore, it is a major motivator for all kinds of other personal sins.

Jealousy is a pervasive ingredient in the human experience that causes so many problems in the area of relationships, with love and romance topping the list. In love toward a member of the opposite sex, the jealous person can be so possessive that they smother and destroy the other person's love. Feelings of fear arise when there is a threatened loss of the affection of the loved one, whether real or imagined. An insecure person who is enjoying the affection of a loved one can become obsessed with losing that affection to another. In this context, jealousy can become insidious, since it preys on the unknowable aspect of a relationship and can grow into monstrous proportions. Once it gets to this point, it is very difficult to get over and will eventually destroy the relationship.

Characteristics of Jealousy

1. It is a mental attitude sin that demands exclusive devotion and is intolerant of competition. It is selfishness and total preoccupation with self.
2. It is discontentment with the blessings, successes, or status symbols of other people.

3. It is the resentment of the attractiveness or approbation that another person receives.
4. It is incapable of love. The jealous person always attacks the object of his jealousy.
5. Jealousy is a possessiveness that suppresses the volition of another person and destroys their privacy; hence, jealousy is tyranny in its simplest form. In other words, you seek to control the object of your jealousy and run their lives.
6. Jealousy breeds fear: fear of losing another's affection or love, fear of rivalry, fear of unfaithfulness.
7. Jealousy is anti-freedom and does not permit people to love you from their own volition. You see, love is only worthwhile when someone gives it to you freely. The jealous person wants you to love them on the basis of their own volition.
8. Jealousy is a violation of the Royal Family Honor Code, **“let us behave properly as in the day...not in strife or jealousy” (Rom 13:13).**
9. Jealousy is an emotional sin, as well as a part of the arrogance complex. Therefore, it is irrational in its resentment of others. A person consumed by jealousy has no ability to think or to reason.
10. Jealousy causes a person to be troubled by the suspicion that a person's love has been diverted to a rival.
11. Jealousy is inordinate competition in love, in business, in social life, in athletics, and in the spiritual life.
12. Jealousy rejects Bible doctrine. The unbeliever rejects the Gospel; the believer rejects doctrine.
13. Jealousy can produce physical sickness as well as mental disorder: **“A tranquil heart [right lobe] is life to the body, but jealousy is rottenness to the bones” (Pro 14:30). “For jealousy slays the foolish man, and anger kills the stupid” (Job 5:2).**

The greatest problem-solving device against jealousy is impersonal, virtue love. When a believer operates in impersonal love, jealousy is not a problem because scripture teaches that **“love is patient, love is kind, and is not jealous” (1Co 13:4).**

Anger

At the beginning of this chapter we noted that there are three great enemies of relationships: bitterness, jealousy, and anger. We've already noted the destructive qualities of bitterness and jealousy, and once those have set in, anger is soon to follow. Anger is the outward expression of the emotional sins that lie within. When people are bitter, it is not long before it is manifested in overt sin. For example, bitter people malign, slander, criticize and backbite others. Bitterness results in hatred, cruelty, antagonism, implacability, vindictiveness, vengefulness, inordinate ambition and inordinate competition, each of which is an expression of anger. Not only is anger a sin, but it is also emotion minus any control from the intellect. The person influenced by anger can go in two different directions. First, there is the anger of the subjective personality who reacts with introversion. This person becomes so occupied with himself that he sulks and pouts. Pre-occupation with self destroys not only your spiritual life, but also your personality. Moreover, the subjective person is very quiet in his anger, and for months will build resentment and bitterness against friends and loved ones because his anger is bottled up. Secondly, there is the objective personality, which causes the person to blow up without regard to the feelings of others. Both categories of people are trying to use anger as a solution to their problems, rather than impersonal, unconditional love. As a result, what they are really doing is manufacturing more problems.

Anger, as a mental attitude, expresses itself in antagonism, hatred, bitterness, resentment and irrationality. It can be mental, emotional or both. The Bible distinguishes between mental and emotional anger. There are basically two words used in the Koine Greek to define anger: "ogre" which refers to mental anger, and "thumos" which refers to emotional anger. Both types are related to bitterness in the following passage, **“Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice” (Eph 4:31)**. If your right lobe is dominating, and you become angry, you can react in mental anger (ogre). If your reaction is from emotion, then it is emotional anger (thumos), however both are unjustifiable reactions. Anger is a sin that motivates other sins, such as gossip, judging, and maligning, among others. As with most sins, anger results in chain sinning, and it motivates jealousy and cruelty. A person cannot be angry without being cruel and unfair. If left unchecked, anger will develop bitterness or vindictiveness, and then it will emerge either verbally or as some form of retaliation or revenge.

However, it is possible to respond to unfairness apart from sin. For instance, you can be angry because of maltreatment or gossip from others, and yet still put the matter in the Lord's hands. When maltreated, never let reaction to the maltreatment become sin. If you retaliate, then your reaction becomes anger, and you sin. Remember that two wrongs do not make a right. You will never become happy by getting revenge, and you cannot build your happiness on someone else's unhappiness, and this is exactly what retaliation tries to do. To punish someone else through revenge is an obstruction of divine punishment, as well as blasphemy toward divine justice. The New Testament emphasizes that righteousness is to be maintained in the face of unfair treatment.

There is such a thing as righteous indignation, but it is not anger or emotion. Instead, it is a clear understanding of a bad situation. Righteous indignation is response to unfair treatment by concentration on your relationship with God:

But when Jesus saw this, he was indignant and said to them, “Permit the children to come to me; do not hinder them; for the Kingdom of God belongs to such as these” (Mar 10:14)

When it says that Jesus became indignant about the disciples when they forbade the children to be brought to him, it is not referring to anger; He was pointing a serious wrong.

"Get behind me Satan; you [Peter] are a stumbling block to me. You have not concentrated on the things [doctrines] of God, but on the things of man." (Mat 16:23)

Jesus wasn't angry when he said this to Peter, but He wanted to emphasize the importance of His mission.

This principle of righteous indignation is also taught by Paul, **“Be angry, and yet do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger” (Eph 4:26)**. This is a reference to the believer who has already become angry and is warned to stop immediately before he violates the royal family honor code, and greater damage is done. “To be angry and sin not” is righteous indignation, but be very careful, too often righteous indignation is an excuse for the function of legalism. Instead we should follow the command, **“... put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth” (Eph 4:24)**.

Principles Concerning Anger

1. Anger is a sin from the old sin nature: “... the deeds of the flesh...idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions” (Gal 5:19-20).
2. Anger is never an isolated sin: “An angry person stirs up strife, and a hot-tempered person abounds in transgression” (Pro 29:22).
3. Anger destroys a nation: “Thus says the lord, ‘for three transgressions of Edom and for four I will not revoke its punishment, because he pursued his brother with a sword, while he stifled his compassion; his anger also tore continually, and he maintained his fury forever’” (Amo 1:11).
4. Anger is associated with grieving the Holy Spirit: “Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice” (Eph 4:30-31).
5. Anger is the motivation for many other sins: “But now you also, put them all aside: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive speech from your mouth” (Col 3:8).
6. Anger hinders effective prayer: “Therefore I want the men in every place [to], lifting up holy hands, without wrath and dissension” (1Ti 2:8).
7. Anger results in self-induced misery. This occurs when you fail to interpret history or your circumstances correctly, becoming frustrated and then angry: “He who sows iniquity will reap vanity, and the rod of his fury will perish” (Pro 22:8).
8. Anger is the source of chain sinning, which is hidden, hypocritical anger: “See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by it many be defiled” (Heb 12:15).
9. Anger causes misery to those in your periphery: “Do not associate with a man given to anger; or go with a hot-tempered man...an angry man stirs up strife, and a hot-tempered man abounds in transgression” (Pro 22:24; Pro 29:22).
10. Anger destroys a marriage: “It is better to live in a desert land, than with a contentious and vexing woman...it is better to live in a corner of the roof than in a house shared with a contentious woman” (Pro 21:19; Pro 25:24).
11. Anger is related to stupidity and it turns a person into a fool. A person is never smart when angry, which is why many embarrassing things are said in anger. If you have to deal with a problem, remain calm and don't lose your temper: “Do not be hasty to be angry in your right lobe; for anger resides in the bosom of fools” (Ecc 7:9).
12. Anger is motivation for violence: “Anyone who hates his brother is a murderer” (1Jo 3:15).
13. Sinful anger destroys virtue in the subject and therefore, it destroys the function of impersonal love. When sinful anger is perpetuated, it becomes the motivation for many sins: “Husbands love you wives and be not harsh against them” (Col 3:19) (NIV).

Being angry is an emotional readiness to commit action without thinking. However, restraining anger is not the solution. If it is not discharged, anger will accumulate inside until it explodes in some other area of the believer's life. Note that anger comes from within the individual, rather than from the environment or the outside. The only thing that can overcome anger is a change of mental attitude. For the Christian, self-control is a fruit of the Spirit. The key is to properly deal with anger; to develop a growing capacity to accept God's love for us, and in return, extend that love to others with compassion and sensitivity, especially those closest to us.

8 Divorce

We now continue our study with the very misunderstood subject of divorce. The word "divorce" is derived from the Latin word "divortium," which means separation. In American law, divorce is a legal declaration dissolving a marriage and breaking the marriage contract. A legal divorce in the United States gives the parties the legal right of remarriage. We have to remember that one of the big problems in the divorce realm is that many of the things that are occurring today are entirely anti-biblical in their function. Many people seek a divorce because they are frustrated with the marriage they are in, without realizing that all frustration comes from failure in life. In essence, frustrated people do not make the most of their time here on earth. Sadly, this attitude carries over into a marriage.

For too long, the attitude of the Church toward a divorced couple has been rejection. However, God's grace demands an attitude of acceptance. Whatever discipline may be involved is between the two individuals and God; there is no need for ostracism or rejection. All that accomplishes is to expose the failure of the Church and its trend toward legalism, which is more destructive than the many of the other sins committed in marriage.

There are illegitimate reasons for divorce. For instance, incompatibility is not grounds for divorce; it indicates stupidity and superficiality. On the other hand, the scriptures are silent concerning many of the other reasons that believers use for divorce such as: brutality; drunkenness; drug addiction; sexual molestation, especially of children; violence; insanity; or criminality. However, common sense dictates that any time a person enters into a marriage and it becomes a life-threatening situation, obviously, for safety's sake, they have the right to leave.

Please remember as we cover these principles that there is no excuse for any believer in the Lord Jesus Christ to have any guilt, even for a moment. Every sin connected with marriage, divorce and remarriage was already judged on the Cross, along with every other sin. Therefore, these are no different from any other category of sins. The unpardonable sin is not living in adultery, or getting married a second time when you shouldn't have. The only sin that leads to eternal damnation is the sin of unbelief.

"He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." (Joh 3:18)

"And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin, and righteousness, and judgment; concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me; and concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you no longer behold Me; and concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged." (Joh 16:8-11)

There is a tremendous amount of arrogance today among believers because they act as though their sins are so bad that they cannot be forgiven. One thing you are going to learn about sins related to marriage, divorce and remarriage, is that there is a solution to them all, and that is

rebound and recovery.

we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (1Jo 1:9)

Before we continue with our discussion of divorce, two grace principles must always be kept in mind :

1. Before salvation, any sin or failure regarding marriage and divorce on your part was blotted out at the moment you believed in Christ. So, in essence, we start over at the moment of salvation. Therefore, you are obviously not held accountable for any sin or failure before salvation.

I have wiped out your transgressions like a thick cloud, and your sins like a heavy mist. (Isa 44:22)

I, even I, am the one who wipes out your transgressions for My own sake; and I will not remember your sins. (Isa 43:25)

2. If you have been divorced and are now remarried, do not try to dissolve the marriage; remain in the status quo. The solution to handling any sins associated with marriage is to rely on the grace of God.

Legitimate Reasons for Divorce, but no Right to Remarry

As previously stated, there are some legitimate reasons for divorce, but not for remarriage. Obviously, in some situations, the only solution is to get divorced. Any life threatening, or abusive activity is a legitimate reason for divorce, but it is not a legitimate reason for remarriage. Such instances include:

1. Brutality to spouse or children because that's a life-threatening situation.
2. Substance abuse; that would be drug addiction and/or alcoholic problems.
3. Sexual abuse of the spouse and children, which today is a terrible problem; and sexual abuse of children is a monstrous thing.
4. Adultery.

We must remember that the Scriptures are silent when it comes to certain marital problems and when the Bible is silent about these things, as believer priests, we must seek the Lord's counsel and help in such matters. . While some of you may consider it unfair and want to know the reason why you are not able to remarry when you've been the victim of divorce because of brutality, drunkenness, drug addiction, sexual molestation, violence, insanity and criminality, the answer is very simple. The reason that you cannot remarry in these situations is that the Bible doesn't say you can!

The Marriage of a Believer and an Unbeliever

The Bible teaches that if you're married to an unbeliever and they are willing to live with you, then there is no ground for separation or divorce. Unfortunately, in this day and age, many

people just get tired of their partners and look for any means of escape. The following passage tells us that we are to remain married to an unbelieving spouse:

But to the rest I say, not the Lord, that if any brother has a wife who is an unbeliever, and she consents to live with him, let him not send her away. And a woman, who has an unbelieving husband, and he consents to live with her, let her not send her husband away. For the unbelieving husband is sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified through her believing husband; for otherwise your children are unclean, but now they are holy. Yet if the unbelieving one leaves, let him leave; the brother or the sister is not under bondage in such cases, but God has called us to peace. (1Co 7:12 -15)

The phrase "sanctified and holy," does not mean salvation, but a separation for divine blessing. This is what we call blessing because of association, and under the principle of sanctification, God blesses the unbeliever because of the believer in the marriage. One believer in a marriage, or family, sanctifies the marriage or family. Therefore, this status is no excuse for dissolving the marriage. It may be wrong for you to marry an unbeliever, but it is just as wrong for you to divorce.

There are five reasons why the believer should consider the importance of remaining married to an unbeliever:

1. The possibility of winning the unsaved spouse to the Lord.
2. The principle of accepting responsibility for your own decisions.
3. The principle that two wrongs never make a right.
4. The principle of providing a stabilized environment for the rearing of children.
5. Unified families provide stability in the client nation.

Remember, if you think by getting rid of one partner, and picking up another you're going to solve your problem, you're mistaken, because the new partner will have an old sin nature just like the one before.

Death of a Spouse Dissolves a Marriage

This is probably an obvious point; nevertheless, the death of a spouse does dissolve a marriage:

For the married woman is bound by law to her husband while he is living; but if her husband dies, she is released from the law [of marriage] concerning the husband. So then if, while her husband is living, she is joined to another man, she shall be called and adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from the law [or the marriage contract], so that she is not an adulteress, though she is joined to another man. (Rom 7:2-3)

A wife is bound as long as her husband lives; but if her husband is dead, she is free to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord. But in my opinion she is happier if she remains as she is [unmarried]; and I think that I also have the Spirit of God. (1Co 7:28-40)

Paul is saying that she is free to remarry if she desires to, but in his opinion, she will be happier if she doesn't. He is not saying that she cannot be happy in marriage, but that she will be happier if she remains as she is. Therefore, Paul is emphasizing the fact that all marriages will have problems. If you are in this position and are thinking of getting married again, remember to proceed with caution. Before you make any decisions, be sure that you have dealt with the trauma related to your previous marriage, and that you are proceeding with the Lord's blessing. If you do not proceed with caution, cognizant of biblical guidance and standards, then your next marriage will also be a very difficult one.

The Marriage of Two Believers

Since our subject is the Christian marriage, we are now going to focus on what the Church-age epistles have to say about the subject of divorce as it concerns the believer. Under the biblical principle of dispensationalism, different parts of the Bible must be rightly divided according to the policy in effect at that time. For example, in the Age of Israel, the nation of Israel was a theocracy. This means that the laws of the nation, including establishment principles, were ordained and established directly by God. Those books of the Bible that expounded on the Mosaic Law included the legal basis for divorce in that nation as God permitted Moses to give them. However, as our Lord Jesus Christ stated, from the beginning it was not so (Mat 19:9). Therefore, under the principle that the laws function under the dispensation, the following scriptures should be noted:

"When a man takes a wife and marries her, and it happens that she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some indecency in her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce and puts it in her hand and sends her out from his house, and she leaves his house and goes and becomes another man's wife, and if the latter husband turns against her and writes her a certificate of divorce and puts it in her hand and sends her out of his house, or if the latter husband dies who took her to be his wife, then her former husband who sent her away is not allowed to take her again to be his wife, since she has been defiled; for that is an abomination before the Lord, and you shall not bring sin on the land which the Lord your God gives you as an inheritance. (Deu 24:1-4)

Some Pharisees came to Jesus, testing Him and asking, " Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any reason at all?" And He answered and said, "Have you not read that He who created them from the beginning MADE THEM MALE AND FEMALE, and said, 'FOR THIS REASON A MAN SHALL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER AND BE JOINED TO HIS WIFE, AND THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH'? "So they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate." They said to Him, "Why then did Moses command to GIVE HER A CERTIFICATE OF DIVORCE AND SEND her AWAY?" He said to them, "Because of your hardness of heart Moses permitted you to divorce your wives; but from the beginning it has not been this way. "And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery." (Mat 19:3-9)

This is why the subject of divorce was addressed by our Lord Jesus Christ in the New

Testament Gospels concerning the Jewish law. In certain passages, our Lord is dealing with the interpretation of the Mosaic Law, while in other passages He describes the coming Messianic Kingdom.

“You have heard that it was said, 'YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY'; but I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye makes you stumble, tear it out and throw it from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. If your right hand makes you stumble, cut it off and throw it from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to go into hell. It was said, 'WHOEVER SENDS HIS WIFE AWAY, LET HIM GIVE HER A CERTIFICATE OF DIVORCE;’ but I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except for the reason of unchastity, makes her commit adultery; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery. (Mat 5:27-32)

And He said to them, "Whoever divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery against her; and if she herself divorces her husband and marries another man, she is committing adultery." (Mar 10:11-12)

“The Law and the Prophets were proclaimed until John; since that time the gospel of the kingdom of God has been preached, and everyone is forcing his way into it. But it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one stroke of a letter of the Law to fail. Everyone who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery, and he who marries one who is divorced from a husband commits adultery.” (Luk 16:16-18)

Yet, as Christians, we are not members of the theocracy of Israel, nor are we citizens in the coming Millennial Kingdom. As members of the Church-age dispensation, we go to the New Testament epistles to receive our instructions concerning how to live the Christian way of life. During the dispensation of the Church-age, the laws of the nation are not set by the Church, but rather by civil governments, which are not theocracies. The moral code of the Mosaic Law was fulfilled by our Lord Jesus Christ, and now has been superseded for the Church-age believer by the law of the Spirit. That law is embodied in the commands found in the New Testament epistles.

Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law. For this, "YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY, YOU SHALL NOT MURDER, YOU SHALL NOT STEAL, YOU SHALL NOT COVET," and if there is any other commandment, it is summed up in this saying, "YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF." Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law. (Rom 13:8-10)

The New Testament epistles treat marriage in a spiritual way. The letters to the Ephesians and Colossians address marriage, but not divorce and remarriage. In fact, the only place in the New Testament epistles that deals in any length with the subject of marriage in the natural and spiritual realm is in 1 Corinthians chapter 7.

Let's see what the New Testament epistles have to say concerning the subject of ending a marriage. The general principle stated by our Lord in the book of Matthew is in view in the writings of the apostle Paul to the Corinthian church:

And He answered and said, "Have you not read that He who created them from the beginning MADE THEM MALE AND FEMALE, and said, 'FOR THIS REASON A MAN SHALL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER AND BE JOINED TO HIS WIFE, AND THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH'? "So they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate." (Mat 19:4-6)

In the Gospels, the Lord Jesus Christ is revealing the original purpose of marriage between a man and a woman, which is the fact that what God has joined, let no man separate. He quotes Gen 2:24, where He says the two will become one flesh. They will be united together based on God's design for marriage of two people. Even if there is a separation, they are still bonded (as elaborated in 1Co 7:10-11) until they die. Paul draws on this general principle when he gives instructions to the husband and wife in the Church:

But to the married I give instructions, not I, but the Lord, that the wife should not leave her husband (but if she does leave, she must remain unmarried, or else be reconciled to her husband), and that the husband should not divorce his wife. (1Co 7:10-11)

Here in the New Testament epistles we do not find Paul granting permission to divorce and remarry at all.

The Question of Desertion

Yet if the unbelieving one leaves, let him leave; the brother or the sister [the male or the female] is not under bondage in such cases, but God has called us to peace. (1Co 7:15)

Please notice that Paul does not say here (or anywhere else) that a Christian who is deserted by his or her unbelieving spouse has the right to marry someone else. The key word here is the English word "bondage," which in the Greek is the perfect passive indicative of the verb "doulouo" meaning to be enslaved or made a servant. To say that the deserted spouse is not enslaved to the vows of marriage is not to say that he or she may be remarried. It speaks of being free from the responsibilities involved with that marriage, but in no way does it speak of any right to remarry. The context of this passage reveals the fact that Paul is addressing the married state as one among several where he admonishes the members of the church to accept the situation in which God has called him, just as he is. If you are married, stay married. If your unbelieving partner deserts you, let them go.

Each man must remain in that condition in which he was called. (1Co 7:20)

Brethren, each one is to remain with God in that condition in which he was called. (1Co 7:24)

The point must be made that Paul is addressing issues related to the spiritual life of the

believer in the Church-age; he is not intruding on the legal issues related to divorce and remarriage in the realm of the civil authorities. As we end this section, I must tell you that I was tempted to short circuit the entire chapter and simply include the single word: grace.

"I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness comes through the Law, then Christ died needlessly." (Gal 2:21)

The right to divorce and remarry is a matter of what the laws of establishment say. By the same token, judging someone, or excluding them on the basis of their marital record is legalism and not grace, and frankly none of our business.

You have been severed from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace. (Gal 5:4)

Finally, always remember that your decisions concerning marriage or divorce are no one else's business, and likewise, the situations of other people are of no concern to you.

Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies. (Rom 8:33)

"Do not judge lest you be judged. For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you. (Mat 7:1-2)

"Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment." (Joh 7:24)

"You people judge according to the flesh; I am not judging anyone." (Joh 8:15)

Therefore you are without excuse, every man {of you} who passes judgment, for in that you judge another, you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things. (Rom 2:1)

Who are you to judge the servant of another? To his own master he stands or falls; and stand he will, for the Lord is able to make him stand. (Rom 14:4)

But you, why do you judge your brother? Or you again, why do you regard your brother with contempt? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of God. (Rom 14:10)

Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather determine this-- not to put an obstacle or a stumbling block in a brother's way. (Rom 14:13)

"For we hear that some among you are leading an undisciplined life, doing no work at all, but acting like busybodies [violators of privacy].such persons we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ to work in quiet fashion and mind their own business."["Eat their own bread' is an idiom for minding your own business.] (2Th 3:11-12)

"And at the same time also, they learn to be idle, having wandered around from house to house; and not merely idle, but also gossips, intruders of privacy, constantly saying those things which ought not to be mentioned." (1Ti 5:13)

9

How to have a Successful Marriage

In this chapter we will endeavor to answer the question of what makes a marriage succeed. For the Christian, all of the solutions in life are spiritual, which means they are doctrinal solutions based on the Word of God. As a Christian, we enjoy the privacy of our royal priesthood, which gives us the power to look at the principles of marriage and relationships with humility and objectivity. No believer can have a successful marriage apart from a right relationship with God. This is an extension of the general principle that a proper relationship with God should precede any relationship with people. If your relationship with God is a failure then your relationship in marriage, and with people in general, will also be a failure.

For a marriage to work, or a relationship to turn out right, there must be an understanding of the principles of Bible doctrine and especially of the teachings on impersonal, unconditional love; forgiveness; and the ten problem-solving devices. The reasons why marriages fail are found not in the symptoms, but in the disease, and in this case, the disease is failure to live in the light of Bible doctrine. Marriages fail because believers fail to live in the plan of God for their lives. The greatest of these failures is the lack of impersonal, virtue love, as well as the failure to apply God's Word and His principles of forgiveness. It is particularly important to understand the grace of God. This is what Satan overlooked in the Garden and has not understood since; he cannot now, or ever, defeat the grace of God. When you understand grace and divine good, you understand the infinite and eternal genius of God, and how He has restored everything that was corrupted in the Fall. Grace is a doctrine that insulates the believer against the satanic policy of human good and evil. Satan's schemes cannot defeat us when we are functioning under the principles of grace.

Before we continue, let me remind you of the very important principle that no one is perfect, and that we have all failed completely at one time or another, whether in relationships, or in marriage. Therefore, don't beat yourself up about the past, because you cannot undo past failures, no matter what they are. The only course of action that remains is to take responsibility for your actions, and press on in the Word of God; that is, recover and keep moving! Remember; leave all of your cares and anxiety with Him, because He cares for you: **“Cast all your anxiety upon Him, because He cares for you” (1Pe 5:7)**. With this in mind, the only thing you can do is to let go of the past and never seek to get even for any wrongs done to you. Remember the deep spiritual principle that two wrongs do not make a right. This principle applies especially to marriage, relationships, and dating; but it relates to every aspect of life. If you have been wronged in marriage, returning that wrong with evil doesn't make it right. You can never build your happiness upon trying to make someone miserable, even if they did everything they could to make you miserable in the past!

Let's take a look at the doctrines that, if mastered, will help you overcome any problems in the areas of dating, relationships and marriage:

The Ten Problem Solving Devices

The problem-solving devices are a fundamental part of the spiritual life. It is the utilization of these principles, and not human viewpoint that will help in times of trouble. The following problem-solving devices apply to all of the problems that a believer will encounter, and this includes the problems that arise in relationships:

1. Rebound and Recovery as taught in 1Jo 1:9.
2. The filling of the Holy Spirit.
3. The faith-rest life.
4. Grace orientation.
5. Doctrinal orientation.
6. Personal love for God the Father.
7. Impersonal, unconditional love for all mankind.
8. Sharing the perfect happiness of God.
9. Having a personal sense of destiny.
10. The ultimate problem-solving device: occupation with the Lord Jesus Christ.

Impersonal Love

Impersonal love, that is, true biblical love, is a virtue, not an emotion or a feeling. Virtue means graciousness and power, which we receive through the love that God has for us. So if we follow His model, virtue and right thinking will result in right action. In order for any relationship in life to be successful, impersonal, unconditional love must be understood. Lack of knowledge in this area is one of the main reasons that relationships fail. Impersonal, unconditional love is a system of thinking based upon integrity; it proceeds from the thought process of the individual, and it includes the ability to cover and overlook the faults of others. It emphasizes the virtue of the one doing the loving, rather than the qualities of the one receiving love. In other words, it functions based on who and what the subject is, not on who and what the object is. Personal love, on the other hand, is based on the attractiveness of the object of that love. While personal love is an option that God gives us, impersonal love is a command, and it reflects your position in the divine plan of God. Moreover, it reveals your progress as far as the Christian life is concerned, and it reflects your understanding of the grace of God.

Impersonal love is the foundation upon which personal love should be built. When this occurs, personal love is fantastic because it has great capacity and integrity stemming from impersonal love that gives it strength, virtue, and honor, and sustains it through thick and thin. On the other hand, personal love is very weak when it is not backed up with impersonal love, as well as unstable, and highly explosive. For this reason, understanding the relationship between personal and impersonal love is vital in understanding how a proper Christian marriage succeeds. Since anyone can fall in love, that isn't a virtue; the power of personal love comes from the virtue that impersonal love brings to the relationship. Impersonal love is so important that it is best if the man functions under its principles even before the marriage. In most cases, the man must have it before he is even able to identify the one that God has assigned to him. To enter marriage without impersonal love as a problem-solving device is a recipe for malfunction and failure in the relationship, because without virtue love, personal love has no staying power or problem-solving capabilities. Impersonal love is needed in every association in life, but never more so than in the marital relationship, and especially as it moves into the bedroom. In order to be

successful as a lover in marriage, you must function under impersonal, unconditional love.

Similarly, when Paul says, “Husbands, love your wives as Christ also loved the Church and gave himself for it” (Eph 5:25), it is impersonal love that is in view. The Lord loved us with both types of love, personal and impersonal. He loves the Church with personal love because each of its members possesses His perfect divine righteousness, but it was His impersonal love for us that led Him to the Cross. Impersonal love came first because out of impersonal love comes true personal love. It's the only love that is based upon virtue.

Compassion is an extension of impersonal love. Compassion can be described as a sympathetic consciousness of others and their distress, with a desire to remove, or help correct their situation. The Hebrew word for “compassion” is "racham," and it means to handle tenderly or lovingly, to be merciful, or to show pity. It also means a gentle emotion of the mind, and the function of keeping the heart warm. The Greek word for “compassion” is "splagchnizomai," and it means to feel sympathy, pity, or to be moved with compassion. Since God is compassionate toward his people, He expects them to be compassionate toward others. In other words, we must experience the compassion of God, and then share it with those around us. He will never fail to be compassionate toward us, and it's His compassion that motivates His longsuffering and patience. Since He expects us to share this same sense of compassion with a lost and dying world, how much more should we share it with those who are closest to us?

Let's remember two important principles regarding love:

1. Love began with God. In fact 1Jo 4:8 says that “God is love.”
2. Believers should reflect the love of God and this begins with the love of self, reflected by having spiritual self-esteem. Many times our Lord mentioned the importance of love for self:

And you shall love your neighbor as yourself. (Mat 19:19)

You shall love your neighbor as yourself. (Mat 22:39)

You shall love your neighbor as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than these. (Mar 12:31)

If, however, you are fulfilling the royal law, according to the scripture, “you shall love your neighbor as yourself,” you are doing well. (Jam 2:8)

To evaluate whether or not you have impersonal love, just look at the manifestations:

Love is patient, love is kind, and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails. (1Co 13:4-8)

In the first verse, "love (agape; virtue love) is patient," patience is simply poise and self-control. It is the ability to love and make good decisions under the pressure of suffering,

hostility, provocation and unjust treatment. Decisions are not made on the basis of reaction to someone else's hostility or reaction, but on the basis of the doctrine resident in your soul. As a result, you do not surrender your happiness because of someone who has been antagonistic toward you. Therefore, patience is more than endurance, forbearance or long suffering; it is self-possession, and self-command under provocation. Next, the word "kind" in the phrase "love is kind," is from the Greek word "chresteuomai," and it means to show oneself as useful, to show an act of kindness, to have integrity, or to have moral, honest, artistic values. Since impersonal, unconditional love is founded on virtue, "love is not jealous" (1Co 13:4).

Continuing, "love does not brag and is not arrogant" simply means that a person who has impersonal unconditional love has no need to brag or act in arrogance. "Love does not act unbecomingly" means that impersonal unconditional love does not behave dishonorably, and it is not rude. Impersonal love solves the problem of selfishness because "it does not seek its own," but instead puts others before self. Moreover, it "is not provoked," easily irritated or inclined toward anger. Anger not only is a sin, but also is an emotion minus any control from the intellect. A person who gets angry has absolutely no impersonal unconditional love.

"Love does not take into account a wrong suffered," but instead, gives people the benefit of the doubt; and if they are wronged, they are quick to forgive. Forgiveness is one of the most beautiful manifestations of the function of impersonal love:

Above all keep fervent in your love for one another, because love (agape) covers a multitude of sins. (1Pe 4:8)

Furthermore, "love does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth" means that impersonal unconditional love is not happy over injustice but is happy with doctrine and truth. The word "bears" in the phrase "love bears all things," is from the Greek word "stego," and it means to cover with silence, or to put a roof over something or someone. In this verse, it actually means that it keeps all things confidential and private, especially with the people who are loved and cherished. That's why we read that "**hatred stirs up strife, but love covers all transgressions**" (Pro 10:12). Notice, not some transgressions, but all transgressions.

Next, "love hopes all things" is a reference to the believer with confidence in all areas of his life (1Co 13:7).

"Love endures all things" means that impersonal love can outlast all kinds of adversity, suffering, injustice and attacks. Finally, "love never fails" means that love is never defeated, never quits, and never loses its power. Since God is love and He created impersonal, unconditional love, it cannot lose. This is the type of love that allows a relationship to continue no matter what the pressure. Just as we receive impersonal love from God, we are to function in it with our intimate relationships, as well as share it with the world: "**For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life**" (Joh 3:16). Today, many Christians are filled arrogance, jealousy, bitterness, vanity and self-pity; they lack the thoughtfulness, manners and kindness that come from living in the love of God.

Impersonal Love and Spiritual Self-Esteem

It is impossible to have the virtue of impersonal love until you have resolved the problem of love for self. Once established, spiritual self-esteem causes the believer to avoid inordinate ambition and inordinate competition. The following manifestations are characteristic of spiritual self-esteem:

1. First is contentment, which is inner happiness with God, and confidence in your relationship with Him. It is manifested by gratitude within and thanksgiving without. This means that there is no murmuring and complaining in your life.
2. Then, there is mental stability, which means that you have a stabilized system of thought in both pressure and prosperity.
3. Spiritual self-esteem gives the believer an inherent stability, durability and endurance. It is the stage of spiritual growth where, as Gal 4:19 says, "Christ is being formed in you." Mental stability means security, tolerance, patience, acceptance and soundness. It means having the ability to handle trial, hardship, trouble and people. A person with mental stability is reliable because they are faithful and their thinking is clear.
4. Next is what the Bible calls temperance or self-control. This means that the believer is in command of himself: he has self-restraint when mistreated; self-discipline with daily responsibilities; self-denial when tempted; and self-assurance under pressure. It is when the believer has a fantastic composure in life; this is a confidence not in the flesh, but in the spirit.
5. The believer with spiritual self-esteem also has grace adjustment to life. He is a grateful recipient of God's grace and he demonstrates a gracious attitude toward others.
6. Spiritual self-esteem also produces doctrinal adjustment to life. Doctrinal adjustment to life means having spiritual common sense, and a sense of humor. It also means understanding the uniqueness of the Church-age, especially mystery doctrine and dispensational truth. Doctrinal orientation causes the believer to become excited about the divine assets made available.
7. Spiritual self-esteem is characterized by good decision making, which leads to good results. However, good decisions demand accurate and precise knowledge of the plan of God and maximum perception, metabolization and application of Bible doctrine. As believers, we all need to learn how to choose, and what to choose, means good judgment and discernment. Commitment and dedication are essential in making good decisions.
8. A person with spiritual self-esteem is able to solve his own problems through doctrine, rather than depending on the counseling and advice of others. The problems of insecurity, inferiority, inadequacy, fear and anxiety can all be solved by spiritual self-esteem. The believer at this stage of spiritual growth views difficulties and disasters as opportunities to apply doctrine.
9. Spiritual self-esteem also gives the believer meaning, purpose, definition and direction in life. This means a new, dynamic attitude, viewpoint and perspective on life. His thoughts and priorities change as his focus on the Lord Jesus Christ becomes his motivation for living.
10. Spiritual self-esteem gives the believer the ability to handle suffering for blessing. He has the inherent ability and power to handle all the suffering that he faces and this, of course, includes undeserved suffering.

These are all manifestations of spiritual self-esteem, or Christ being formed in you. There is no short cut! Honor and integrity are not developed in a day.

Impersonal Love and Compatibility

One of the main reasons for divorce in our day and age is lack of compatibility. Compatibility opens up vast areas that stimulate discussion and conversation in the marriage. Compatibility is the husband and wife growing together in their thought life, where they learn from each other, even though they do not always agree. Agreement is not necessary in marriage, and it is not necessary for compatibility. Some of the most stimulating times in life are when there is a failure to agree. So, compatibility becomes a system of thought, a system of admiration, and a system of love.

Forgiveness

The second great weapon that married couples must use to make their marriage a success is God's principle of forgiveness. Of all the weapons at the disposal of the Christian couple, forgiveness is one of the most powerful. To find the answer to bitterness, jealousy, anger and any other related sins, look no further than forgiveness. Remember that the greatest principle regarding forgiveness is that you are to forgive as Christ has forgiven you. Forgiveness means to give up resentment, to excuse a guilty party, to release from payment, and to forget an offense, never bringing it up again, not even to discuss it. If someone asks for your forgiveness and, in honor, you forgive them, then integrity and loyalty to doctrine demand that you forget the offense against you. Also, forgiveness means that you never again recall the offense in your mind or penalize the individual for it. To forgive others as Christ has forgiven us is to graciously forget, graciously pardon, and freely give grace with no conditions. This is the complete opposite of arrogance, which has no ability to forgive or forget.

As an outstanding illustration of forgiveness, Joseph, a great believer from the Old Testament, exhibited tremendous forgiveness toward his brothers who had inflicted great evil upon him: "... **'Therefore, do not be afraid; I will provide for you and your little ones.' So he comforted them and spoke kindly to them**" (Gen 50:21). Joseph had no intention of ever seeking revenge against his brothers, even though they had conspired to throw him into a pit and abandon him. Furthermore, he was not in any way handicapped from the fact that he had a "difficult childhood" or a disastrous upbringing. On the contrary, he was a magnificent, mature believer who functioned under doctrinal orientation plus grace orientation, which means that he had spiritual self-esteem, and a personal sense of destiny; he knew that God had a plan for his life. Under God's perfect timing, he knew he was being prepared one step at a time and would eventually be promoted. In other words, Joseph also used the faith-rest drill.

Therefore, a believer who has a personal sense of destiny never reacts in bitterness or vindictiveness, that is, he never seeks revenge. A personal sense of destiny related to God from maximum perception of Bible doctrine means that you live your life as unto the Lord. Joseph did not feel threatened by his brothers or by the injustices of the past, and he did not in any way take vengeance upon them. Instead, he deferred any punishment that might come to them to the wisdom of the sovereignty of God. Rightfully, he forgave just as Christ has forgiven.

The greatest illustration of forgiveness is the Cross itself, where all the personal sins of the human race were imputed to our Lord Jesus Christ. In His compassion, God the Father judged every one of those sins in Christ so that we could wear the robe of God's righteousness forever. It is compassion that motivates forgiveness, so there must be compassion on the part of the one who forgives. **"But He, being compassionate, forgave their iniquity, and did not destroy them; and often He restrained his anger, and did not arouse all his wrath" (Psa 78:38)**. Compassion means that we remember the frailty of flesh and realize that all of us are sinners saved by grace. Therefore, forgiveness is an attribute that we learn from the Lord's example, as recorded by the Psalmist who wrote, **"If You, Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand? But there is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared" (Psa 130:3-4)**. The word "feared," in the Hebrew, means to reverently worship.

In order to have forgiveness toward others, you must first come to know God, because **"to God belong mercy and forgiveness" (Dan 9:9)**. The more we come to know God, the greater becomes our capacity for a relaxed mental attitude that, in turn, gives us the motivation to extend forgiveness to all who offend us. Remember, he that loves God, hears and loves God's doctrines. It is through occupation with the Lord Jesus Christ that we develop a capacity to forgive. This includes the ability to forgive yourself for things that you do, and to forgive others for things that they do. God has provided forgiveness not only for sin, but also for the guilt that we experience when we do sin. Therefore, believers who are guilt-ridden have not experienced God's forgiveness.

We are told that the blood of Christ is the basis for forgiveness, **"in Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace" (Eph 1:7)**. Since your sins have been paid for, you should respect the blood, or the saving work of Jesus Christ on the Cross. Remember that ultimately, when people sin, they sin against God: **"Against Thee, Thee only I have sinned, and done what is evil in Thy sight" (Psa 51:4)**. So not forgiving others is actually a sin against God who commanded believers to forgive one another. Forgiving one another is not only a command, but also it is needed for fellowship, and unity in a local assembly. Paul brought out this principle when he taught the Ephesians to **"... be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you" (Eph 4:32)**. Furthermore, forgiving others allows God to handle the situation rather than relying on self. **"Never take your revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God. For it is written [Deu 32:35], 'Vengeance is mine; I will repay, says the Lord'" (Rom 12:19)**. Therefore, the believer should strive to have an attitude of forgiveness that is limitless rather than a one more chance attitude. In fact, this lesson is taught to us by the Lord when Peter asked Him about forgiveness: **"Then Peter came and said to him, 'Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Up to seven times?'" (Mat 18:21)**. To forgive someone up to seven times means that you must be keeping track; and to keep a count means that you do not forget and therefore, you really did not forgive. When Peter used seven as the number of times that an offending brother should be forgiven, he thought he was doing some great thing, since this was four times more than that required by Jewish law. Jewish law stated that a person should be forgiven up to three times (Amo 1:3; 2:6). Peter, in suggesting a limit, implied that a man was giving up a right that he might, under certain circumstances, exercise. But, **"Jesus said to him, 'I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven'" (Mat 18:22)**. The purpose of this passage is to make clear that when God calls on a member of His kingdom to forgive, they are not to keep track of offences suffered. God is not calling on us to renounce or give up a right; rather, He is teaching us that under His principles of forgiveness, we have no right in the matter at all. This represents an expression of gratitude that we show to others based upon the unlimited amount of

forgiveness that comes our way from God.

Giving Thanks For All Things

The third great weapon for married couples is the principle of giving thanks for all things, as noted by Paul who said, **“Always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father; and be subject to one another in the fear of Christ” (Eph 5:20-21)**. In order to follow this command, two things are needed: humility and virtue. People who have the ability to be thankful, and grateful have the proper mental attitude necessary to succeed in the Christian way of life. This includes both the ladies and the men. In this verse, the term “be subject” is from the Greek verb "hupotasso," and it means to respect. So here, it should read, “respecting each other.” Respect comes from integrity and virtue, which leads to giving attention where attention is due. So, this is a reference to impersonal, unconditional love on the part of both the husband and the wife. This respect is motivated by respect for, and occupation with, the Lord Jesus Christ. Just as wives should respect their husbands because they respect Jesus Christ, so ought husbands to respect their wives because they respect Jesus Christ. In order for marriages to be successful, there must be mutual respect.

How to Have a Successful Marriage

10

The Winner's Circle for the Christian Marriage

All Church-age believers have been created to bring honor to God, and to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ in what we call the Angelic Conflict, which is the appeal trial of Satan. As a born-again believer in Jesus Christ, you have the capacity to live a phenomenal life filled with privilege and opportunity. While it is not the purpose of this book to describe in detail the Angelic Conflict, there is an abundant amount of material available on this subject in the form of tapes and CDs, as well as on the church website.¹

The dispensation of the Hypostatic-union and the dispensation of the Church are the intensified stages of this trial. In these stages, God is bringing forth three witnesses to prove His case, and to demonstrate to Satan, once and for all, that God's way is gracious and merciful. The Lord Jesus Christ was the first witness; any believer who becomes an invisible hero during the Church-age becomes a part of the second category of witnesses; and two believers in a Christian marriage become the third and final category of witnesses. It is a unique testimony to what God has ordained for the Church-age. The Christian marriage gives some believers the opportunity to glorify God in a special way and put another nail in the coffin of Satan.

Being separated from the general institution of marriage, the Christian marriage is given a unique status. The standards and values of the Christian marriage are higher than any that have ever been communicated to mankind. Furthermore, the marriage of two believers is the proving ground for the mandates, and duties that demand the highest form of virtue that has ever existed; and they can only be fulfilled through the positive spiritual lives of both the husband and wife. When the couple in a marriage fulfills the spiritual life corporately, that marriage becomes a collective witness for the prosecution in the Angelic Conflict, and that marriage receives the very highest and best from God. While it is impossible to measure the total impact that this testimony will have, one thing is certain: if these standards are met in a generation, you can count on having a pivot of mature believers who will bring blessings on their nation.

After describing the guidelines for marriage in Eph 5:22-31, Paul explained the importance of the Christian marriage in the total scheme of things. He said, **“This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church” (Eph 5:32)**. This mystery cannot be the institution of marriage, because marriage has always existed since the beginning of the human race. Rather, the mystery of Ephesians 5:32 goes back to the Garden of Eden. In the fall, Adam lost one of the original designs of marriage, which was intimacy. Remember how they covered themselves with fig leaves after their sin? Well, thanks be to God, at the Cross, the Lord recovered the potential to fulfill that design, and now two believers in the Church-age can experience a relationship that is analogous to the eternal marriage between the Lord Jesus Christ and His bride, the Church, and that is a fantastic gift.

Just like our Lord was tested during the first incarnation, and the winner believer is tested and interrogated separately, so the Christian marriage will be tested and interrogated separately

as well. Marriage is a testing ground for the spiritual life, but do not be afraid of these challenges, because they are given for your spiritual advancement. Once you take the focus off of yourself, your spouse, and your marriage and place it on the glorification of the Lord Jesus Christ, you have the power to handle anything in life. Remember this principle: if you can make it in marriage, you can make it in life; for marriage is much more demanding than any other relationship that you will have. Moreover, the Christian marriage is so important because the angels are watching. That's right, angels, both elect and fallen, are observing intently all that is happening here on earth. Assembled in the heavens is the entire angelic host, anxiously waiting the unfolding of God's plan. Angels do not experience the intimacy of the marital relationship and they will never experience anything like the relationship that a believer has with the Lord. Instead, angels learn from us by observing how we respond to God's principles and that includes marriage; that is why the events here on earth are so compelling to them. Therefore, the marriage between two believers in the Church-age becomes the ultimate in Christian service. If you look at your marriage in this light, you will realize that it is a part of your Christian service, and your spiritual life.

While the elect angels are observing Christian marriages and cheering us on, the fallen angels are watching and doing all that they can to trip us up, because the Christian marriage is a part of the damaging testimony being presented against Satan in his trial. Since Satan and all his fallen angels know all about the power of this testimony, they persistently try to blind the eyes of couples. Their ultimate goal is to destroy the institution of Christian marriage by getting the average believer to disregard and reject Bible doctrine. When Satan sees a man treat his wife with tenderness, devotion and love, like the love that the Lord has for the Church, he is infuriated. Likewise, when he sees a woman stand behind her man through thick and thin, treating him with dignity and respect even when he is wrong (and he will be), Satan is enraged because that woman is succeeding at something he failed to do. The woman is being humble and responsive to her man and adjusting to his will, when Satan failed to be humble, and to adjust to the will of God. Such a woman makes him look foolish, arrogant and selfish. That alone should provide immense motivation for you Christian wives because, next to the Lord Jesus Christ, you can be the greatest witnesses against Satan in the history of the world. Think about it: you have the power to make Satan look like a fool; and that should make you feel pretty special.

So, the choice is yours as to whether or not you will fall prey to Satan and his schemes, or if you instead will strive to become a mature believer, on the front lines, dedicated and devoted to the plan of God, knowing that Satan is against you with all his principalities and powers.

Thus concludes this study on the divine rules that God has given to help us to execute His plan in regard to marriage. Remember, above all else, that God must have top priority in your life. Therefore, if possible, the husband and wife, or boyfriend and girlfriend, should learn doctrine together. The couple that grows together spiritually stays together.

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