Focus on Christian Marriage

Moses C. Onwubiko

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Grace Evangelistic Ministries, Inc.
Nashville, Tennessee, U.S.A.

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"Buy TRUTH, and do not sell it"
(Proverbs 23:23a).

Indeed, truth (i.e. sound Bible teaching) is hard to come by. Therefore when God, in His infinite grace, leads you to the truth, you are to embrace it and cherish it. You are to hold to it tenaciously. For in it is hidden the capacity to enjoy life, happiness and blessings in time and eternity to come.

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To crown my gratitude, my standing ovation goes to my best Friend, the King of kings, Lord of lords, the bright Morning Star, my eternal Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. His efficacious sacrifice on the Cross almost 2,000 years ago has made it possible for me to communicate the Word of God today in this book.

An Invitation to the Unbeliever

The information in this book can't benefit you unless you are born again, that is, born spiritually. The good news is that you can be born again into God's family at this very moment!

When our Lord Jesus Christ was hanging on the Cross, He had you personally on His mind. No sin has ever been committed, not matter how horrible, that wasn't poured out on Jesus Christ on the Cross and judged (I Peter 2:24). As the God-Man, Jesus Christ endured all afflictions, insults, and pain so that He might provide eternal life for you. The issue now is: Do you believe His payment for your sins was enough to get you to heaven?

Every good person has sinned and falls short of God's perfect righteousness. Everyone is condemned by God (Romans 3:23). Therefore, both the good and the bad need a Savior. Regardless of how good you have been or how sinful you have been or how terribly you have failed in the past, you can begin a new life as a member of God's family right now. How? Simply by silently telling God the Father that you are believing in His Son Jesus Christ as your personal Savior. The very second you put your trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, you automatically become a member of God's family!
Jesus Christ Himself said,

> Unless you believe that I am He, you shall die in your sins (John 8:24b).

The issue is faith alone in Christ alone.

> For you have been saved by grace through faith, and this [salvation] is not from yourselves. It is a gift from God, not as a result of human works lest any man should boast (Ephesians 2:8-9).

> For God loved the world so much that He gave His Son, the uniquely born One, so that anyone who believes in Him will never perish but have eternal life (John 3:16).

Will you believe in Him now? Faith alone in Christ alone is the only way to have eternal life. You may wish to pause now and believe in Him.

To The Believer

Because you are a member of God's family through faith alone in Christ alone, you have direct access to your heavenly Father; therefore, your sins have become a family matter. In order to understand and benefit from reading this book, God the Holy Spirit must control your soul; however, the Holy Spirit can't control your soul if you have any unconfessed sin in your life.

> If we acknowledge our sins, He [God the Father] is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to purify us from all wrongdoing (I John 1:9).

In confession — the acknowledgment of your sins directly to God, not to others — you, the sinner, come to a common agreement with God on the fact that your negative thought or word or action was a sin. God has already condemned it as a sin, and He expects you to admit to Him that it is a sin. Confession to God has been provided as the only means of being restored to a proper relationship with God after you sin. As with salvation, restoration to fellowship with God is based on grace alone and not on your works.

When you have no unconfessed sin in your lives, the Holy Spirit is no longer quenched or grieved; thus you are once again restored to fellowship with God and also controlled by the Holy Spirit. This is true spirituality.

Now in the privacy of your soul, you should pause and acknowledge any unconfessed sin(s) to God so that the Holy Spirit can make the doctrines in this book clear and effective in your life.

Preface

Since the initial printing of this book in 2,001, we have seen the institution of marriage come under every conceivable kind of attack and then some. Many have considered the idea of "one man, one woman" hard, but now that some do not know how to define "man" or "woman," things are increasingly more complicated.

We encourage those married and those preparing for marriage to orient to God's plan and purpose for their lives by consulting the unchanging truths of the Bible and leaving the advice of the world behind. We pray that these pages will bring biblical guidance and encouragement as you endeavor to bring honor and glory to the Lord through the witness of your Christian marriage.

Biblical knowledge and its application. Biblical knowledge and its application.

It cannot be repeated enough and no Christian marriage can survive without it. They are the backbone of both a meaningful Christian life and a meaningful Christian marriage. The Bible provides every truth necessary to live the spiritual life, glorify God, and enjoy marriage to the maximum.

Divine principles undergird all marriages. A believer who refuses to learn these principles or who ignores or misapplies them can convert the most loving marriage into a disaster. If learned and applied correctly, these principles can take a marriage as close to Heaven on earth as possible. A two-strand cord is hard to break. A three-strand cord is almost impossible to break. A marriage based on divine principles becomes that three-strand cord — a husband, his wife, and the truths of the Bible stored in their souls through their daily intake of God's Word.

Marriage is the major testing center in their spiritual battle with Satan and his world. The moment two believers are joined in holy matrimony, they are taken immediately into the battlefield — the testing center — to be scrutinized for the rest of their lives. Satan and the fallen angels gnash their teeth any time a married couple succeeds in executing the spiritual life, and the elect angels cheer!

The solutions to marital problems are not found in psychology books. Man's solutions cannot be incorporated with divine solutions, not in the Garden of Eden, not now, and not ever! No substitute for Bible truth is acceptable to God. The Word of God, accurately taught by a pastor-teacher to his congregation on a regular basis, is the only means designed by God to handle every exigency in marriage. There's no glory in using human solutions to simply survive in an empty marriage. We glorify God by using His Word to overcome the problems of life and marriage.

Sadly, many pastors have failed their congregations by not teaching the Word of God exegetically — line by line, precept upon precept, comparing Scripture with Scripture. The members of their doctrinally deprived congregations have not learned the Truth and, therefore, are unable to handle their problems privately "as unto the Lord." Too many churches have substituted "marriage counseling" for Bible teaching and "divorce care" for consistency in Bible teaching. In essence, those who do these substitutions are saying that the solutions provided by God are inadequate.

This book will explain that marriage in itself does not produce instant happiness, that marriage can be chaotic if the divine principles guarding it are ignored or overlooked, and that an unhappy person before marriage will be an unhappy person after marriage. In fact, marriage combines the problems of two people, thus intensifying their stress in life. Ignoring or misapplying the divine principles of marriage compounds unbearable problems in life. A carnal believer can more easily handle his own unhappiness than the double unhappiness of himself and his spouse. Carnal believers have no business marrying — of course, they have no business being carnal either! Acknowledgment of sins and execution of the spiritual life will solve the carnality problem and make success in marriage possible for them.

Too many believers have not married their right spouse because of impatience or lack of Bible knowledge. This book will take into consideration these believers and will provide divine solutions to make marriage enjoyable for them. Remember that for God no damage in marriage — or in life — is irreparable. No problem exists that the Word of God cannot solve. But remember also that no one-time, quick fix exists for a troubled marriage. Marriage is a life-long commitment to each other and to the application of Biblical principles that solves all problems and brings supreme blessings.

Marriage should be entered with clear thinking, integrity, and respect for God, who designed it for our enjoyment and His own glory. Yes, that's right — God intends that we, as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, enjoy our marriage and glorify Him by doing so.

Our relationship with God is infinitely more important than our relationship with any person; however, our relationship with our spouse is infinitely more important than any other human relationship. As a married person, we cannot live the spiritual life apart from putting God and our marriage first.

The question is: Are you passing or failing your spiritual tests in selecting your spouse and then in fulfilling God's plan for your marriage?

Chapter One

Introduction & Definition

Before we begin our study of marriage, we need to examine some general principles.

1. God is perfect, and thus His work is perfect. The writer of the book of Deuteronomy declared,

   > He is the Rock. His works are perfect, and all His ways are just. A faithful God who does no wrong, He is upright and just (Deuteronomy 32:4).

2. God invented marriage; therefore, His plan for marriage is perfect. He has made perfect provision for a husband and wife to fulfill their roles in marriage, provisions of grace, namely the Bible and the enabling power of the Holy Spirit. A believer cannot fulfill his role in marriage apart from these two provisions.
3. God provides rules by which a marriage can be victorious. Some of these rules began in the Garden of Eden before man sinned. Others were added after man sinned.
4. The rules for Christian marriage began with the Church Age and are detailed in the epistles of the New Testament.
5. Anyone who ignores God's rules for marriage fails in marriage. There are no neutral marriages. A marriage, like the spiritual life, is either succeeding or failing.
6. A perfect plan is meaningless without perfect execution, but man is imperfect; therefore, he[1] can't fulfill a perfect plan on his own initiative. Human solutions mustered together from human viewpoint have never worked. We need the power of the Holy Spirit in order to succeed in the spiritual life and in marriage.

To understand marriage, we must understand the difference between the divine institution of marriage and Christian marriage. The divine institution of marriage, which God has ordained for both

[1] Instead of using his/her or he/she, etc., when referring to both sexes, I will use the masculine pronoun throughout this book, the same form that was used in the original languages of the Scriptures.

believers and unbelievers, had its beginning in the Garden of Eden and will be perpetuated throughout history until the new heaven and the new earth are brought in at the end of the Millennium. God added Christian marriage to the divine institution of marriage in the Church Age, which began in 30 AD, ten days after the victorious re-entry of our Lord Jesus Christ into the presence of God the Father in Heaven, where He now sits as our High Priest (Hebrews 10:21) and Defending Attorney (I John 2:1). The word Christian, never used in the Old Testament, first was used in Antioch at the beginning of the Church Age (Acts 11:26). Thus, the guidelines for Christian marriage are found only in the epistles of the New Testament, which were written after 30 A.D.

Christian marriage is the union of two Church Age believers and is the highest form of service to God in any dispensation. Christian marriage, which is entirely different from all other marriages, even from those between believers in other dispensations, is now a revealed mystery, revealed in the epistles of the New Testament.

Marriage for believers has always been tied to the spiritual life. This connection is intensified in the Church Age because Church Age believers have the greatest spiritual life ever. Because marriage is a testing place, more of the spiritual life is necessary to fulfill the divine mandates in Christian marriage than in any other part of life.

> To whom much is given much is expected, and to whom much is entrusted, of him they will ask the more (Luke 12:48b).

Two Types of Marriage

God never makes mistakes. Marriage is no exception. He tailor-makes every male to have a uniquely compatible female partner. Each is perfect for the other mentally, anatomically, emotionally, and spiritually (in the case of two believers). No one else fits those specifications. No other key opens the door to immeasurable happiness on earth.

In the Church Age, God authorizes only two types of marriages, namely, marriage between two believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, called Christian marriage, and marriage between two unbelievers, called the divine institution of marriage. God forbids the marriage of a believer to an unbeliever. The apostle Paul emphatically warned believers,

> Do not be yoked [married] together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? (II Corinthians 6:14)

In another passage, Paul wrote that,

> A wife is bound [to her marriage] 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* [only to a man who is a believer] (I Corinthians 7:39 emphasis added).

When a believer defies God and marries an unbeliever, he guarantees himself much sorrow. He can't help being influenced by non-biblical world views that he hears from his spouse. His marriage can't be a corporate testimony in the angelic conflict. He and his unbelieving spouse can't share a common reward for time and eternity.

The marriage of a believer and an unbeliever is considered a mixed marriage in God's eyes; however, racially mixed marriages are not prohibited in the Word of God as long as both are believers or both are unbelievers. At salvation, all believers are spiritually equal before God without distinction of race, social position, and gender.

> There is neither Jew nor Gentile [no racial distinction], neither slave nor free [no social classes], neither male nor female [no sexual bias], for you [believers] are all one in Christ Jesus [in union with Christ at salvation] (Galatians 3:28).

If a believer has made the mistake of marrying an unbeliever; the only option he has is to execute the spiritual life in spite of any opposition from his unbelieving spouse. He must treat his spouse with love and kindness, taking full responsibility for his mistake. All other believers must treat his marriage with compassion. He made a mistake in marrying an unbeliever, but he now has the opportunity and responsibility to win his unbelieving spouse by demonstrating the love of Christ to them. We all make mistakes and must confess our sin[2] and move on in the spiritual life. The goal of a believer

[2] Confession is the most important responsibility of every believer. When we sin, we must acknowledge that sin to God, agreeing with God that it, indeed, was a sin. Through confession, a believer regains the filling of the Holy Spirit and fellowship with God. I John 1:9.

married to an unbeliever is the same as the goal of every believer: To glorify God to the maximum.

Christian Marriage

Even though marriage is a divine institution for the entire human race, for both believers and unbelievers, believers in marriage have the God-given potential to multiply exponentially the very purpose for their existence, namely, the glorification of God. The joy that comes from such a union of bodies, souls, and personalities is magnificent beyond measure. Just think, if an unbeliever with an empty life can find happiness with his right spouse, imagine the happiness you can find with your right spouse if you advance together in the spiritual life and bring glory to God!

Christian marriage is the most unusual, sensitive, and important testimony that can ever exist, a testimony that carries over into eternity. Be aware, however, that the corporate witness of Christian marriage is much more difficult to attain than an individual witness because it combines the Old Sin Nature of the husband with the Old Sin Nature of his wife. Marriages are not made in Heaven but on earth, and Christian marriage is successful only through the diligent application of Bible truth of both husband and wife.

A husband and wife who are mature Christians share a sense of life that is saturated with a sense of grace, security, and identity that calls to each other. The husband takes responsibility for the care, growth, and nurturing of his wife. Everything he possesses he gladly gives her. She is the responder and gladly submits to his will. They are co-workers for a common end, sharing one history and one future.

Should I Marry At All?

You understand now that a Christian should only marry another Christian, but the question remains, should you marry at all? Adam in the Garden of Eden had all the animals with whom to fellowship. He even had daily fellowship with Jesus Christ Himself. Still, God declared it "not good for the man to be alone" (Genesis 2:18). This verse doesn't suggest that Adam was frustrated without a woman, but rather that every man is incomplete until united with the woman God has designed specifically for him. A man without a wife always

battles within himself to fill the void. He remains unfulfilled and empty until he marries his right woman.

A few believers, such as Paul, have the spiritual gift of celibacy.[3] A woman with that gift or one who has yet to meet her right man has Jesus Christ as her right man. He protects and guides her just as her right man would. No one without the gift of celibacy should remain single because God has designed a perfect counterpart for him. Paul did warn, however, that marriage is more difficult than single status because marriage increases distractions and testings.

> And if a virgin should marry, she hasn't sinned, but she will have added adversity in her life. [Marriage increases the problems in life and limits its freedom] (I Corinthians 7:28b).

Being unmarried robs one of certain happiness as well as certain testings. A single person faces fewer challenges to his arrogance and self-centeredness. He is never called upon to sacrifice himself as Christ sacrificed Himself for the Church. He is unable to apply certain doctrines to his life because they apply only to marriage. The woman doesn't have the advantage of a husband to lead her.

> Two are better than one because they have a good return for their labor. For if either one of them falls, one will lift up his companion. But woe to the one who falls when there is not a second one to lift him up. Furthermore, if two lie down together [marriage], they have warmth. But how can one be warm alone? And if one can overpower him who is alone, two can resist him. A cord of strands is not quickly torn apart (Ecclesiastes 4:9-12).

The impact of the testimony of two believers in marriage is greater than the sum of the testimonies of the two as individuals and far greater than any satanic power. One spouse empowers the other and provides the potential for both to glorify God and defeat Satan in the angelic conflict. Because man was created to reflect God's integrity, the testimony of marriage is the ultimate proof that defeats Satan's argument against God's integrity as we will see in the next chapter.

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[3] Celibacy is the state of being unmarried and refraining from sex.

Part of each believer's full-time ministry is that of being a blessing to his spouse, giving each other praise, kindness, forgiveness, and compassion. Such a love blesses and transcends all problems and trials of life. Through marriage, two believers who fulfill the spiritual life enhance their impact for blessing on their children, their generation, their nation. Their combined effect as husband and wife is much greater than their effect as individuals.

Christian marriage unites two believers into one in Christ. Union with Christ, which occurs initially at the moment of salvation (positional sanctification), is analogous to a husband's union with his wife in marriage (Ephesians 5:26). This divine intention should not be forsaken lightly.

Christian Marriage Defined

Christian marriage is defined as "an intimate, personal union to which a man and woman consent, consummated and continuously nourished by sexual intercourse, and perfected in a life-long partnership of mutual love regulated by the Word of God and by the laws and customs which a society develops to safeguard its own continuity and welfare."[4] We need to briefly examine this definition.

". . . An Intimate, Personal Union . . ."

God in His infinite wisdom designed marriage to be an intimate union, demanding the highest form of love from a husband to his wife and the highest form of respect from a wife to her husband. When a husband doesn't have virtue love for his wife or when a wife doesn't respect her husband, their marriage will fail. The union of marriage places a limitation on the personal freedom of both husband and wife. They no longer live for themselves, but they live for each other for the glorification of God.

". . . To Which a Man and Woman Consent . . ."

The Church Age is a unique age, a time when believers have a completed Bible (which is the thinking of Christ) and when human choice is esteemed to the highest. Thus, in Christian marriage, "choice of both parties" must be underlined. Only the believer

[4] Tenney, Merrill. Pictorial Bible Dictionary. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan. 1963.

himself can decide the right time to marry and the right person to marry. Because he himself makes these choices, he willingly consents to the marriage; therefore, he has a determination and responsibility to make the marriage succeed.

". . . Consummated and Continuously Nourished by Sexual Intercourse . . ."

Christian marriage is a coalescence of bodies and souls and is the most phenomenally intimate union in human history, compared by God in His Word to the union of Christ and the Church. God designed sex to serve as a bond, which holds a couple together. Sex is recreation in marriage, a momentary return to the peace and fulfillment of the Garden of Eden, an interlude of nourishment from the pressures of Satan's world. Sex is only meaningful and right when experienced by a husband and his wife. Sex outside of marriage is always wrong and always severely punished by God.

". . . Life-Long Partnership . . ."

The principle of marriage was set up from the beginning. Monogamy. One husband for one wife and only one wife. God designed marriage to be the formation of one entity, combining two separate souls (Genesis 2:24). Husband and wife are interdependent, as symbolized in sex. Their partnership is with each other and with God; Marriage is more than a contract. It is a covenant with God. In their partnership authority lies with the husband, who then has the power and responsibility to protect his wife. The wife responds to her husband as head of the family. He must make himself the leader and protector in marriage. The husband must initiate. As two parts of a whole, husband and wife fortify, satisfy, and fulfill each other.

". . . Of Mutual Love . . ."

In Christian marriage, mutual love includes the virtue love of spouse for spouse and each for God. No believer can enjoy marriage to the maximum apart from the attainment of virtue love in his soul. A wife is to convert this virtue love into humility, which initiates respect and obedience to her husband. A husband is to display this unique love to his wife even if she is unloving. For a husband to love his wife with Christ's intensity of love requires that he develop the same ultimate love that God the Father, God the Son, and God

the Holy Spirit share with each other. He can do so only through consistency in Bible study.

". . . Regulated by the Word of God . . ."

Undoubtedly, Bible doctrine is the pivot on which success in Christian marriage rotates. Both husband and wife should make learning and applying Bible truth their number one priority. God requires them to avail themselves of sound Bible teaching on a daily basis and through its application to reflect the life of Christ.

". . . By the Laws and Customs . . ."

Generally, different cultures have different rituals for marriage. Believers should abide by these cultural dictates as long as they do not interfere with divine principles.

During the Jewish age, marriage took different forms and shapes, ranging from a father arranging the marriage for his son as in the case of Abraham and Isaac (Genesis 24:3, 4, 67), a father arranging the marriage of his daughter (Genesis 29), or a son asking his parents to find him a wife (Judges 14:2). When Abraham sent his chief servant to search for a wife for his son Isaac, he provided his servant with silver, gold, jewelry, and articles of clothing for the family and the yet-to-be wife (Genesis 24). Several generations later, Jacob paid for Rachel by working for her family for seven years — a true labor of love! (Genesis 29)

Today in India, the bride's family pays the bridegroom's family. In Nigeria, the bridegroom pays not only a dowry for his yet-to-be wife but also all expenses, including those of the wedding ceremony itself.

Whatever the differences in culture and tradition, the bottom line is that a believer must marry a believer.

Divine Laws of Marriage Which Lead to a Successful Marriage

God has given Church Age believers three laws which, if followed, ensure a successful marriage. Only three. Follow these mandates from God, and you will have greater happiness than you can conceive. Disregard any of the three, and you will cause yourself misery and destroy any possibility of glorifying God in your life and marriage. Write these rules on your heart, and meditate on them daily.

1. The husband is the authority — the only authority — in marriage. He is to love his wife as Christ loved the Church. Jesus Christ took responsibility for the Church; therefore, the husband is to take responsibility for his wife, physically, mentally, and spiritually. When his personal love for his wife is weak, he is to use virtue love and act toward her with kindness, care, and nurturing (Ephesians 5:25-29, 33; Colossians 3:19).
2. The wife is commanded by God to respect him, not love him. When she can't respect him, she is to use virtue love and respect the principles of marriage (Ephesians 5:22, 24, 33; Colossians 3:18; I Peter 3:1).
3. Husband and wife are to forgive each other as Christ forgives them. When a husband and his wife truly forgive and forget, they truly love. They don't forgive to be forgiven. They forgive because God always forgives them (I Corinthians 4:31-32; Ephesians 4:32).

God gave equal commands to both husband and wife: "Husbands, love your wives just as Christ loved the Church" (Ephesians 5:25). "Wives, submit to your husbands" (Ephesians 5:22). Each of these commands has the same magnitude in content and application. The only way to explain this equality is,

> With the Lord our God there is no injustice or partiality (II Corinthians 19:7a).

No wife can have Christ's thinking without also having His love; and no husband can develop Christ's love without being humble. On the one hand, the wife submits to the leadership of her husband, and on the other hand, the husband submits to the leadership of Christ. Both recognize that their relationship to each other is strictly a matter of the grace of God; therefore, they treat each other with respect and humility.

> A prudent wife is from the Lord (Proverbs 19:14b).

If a prudent wife, a believer growing in grace, is from the Lord — and she is! — then, likewise, a prudent husband, a believer growing in grace, is also from Him.

Chapter Two

The Angelic Conflict

Many Christian marriages collapse because husband and wife, even though believers, fail to recognize that marriage is a battleground designed for the glorification of God in the angelic conflict. Let me repeat that: Marriage is a battleground! Some marriages will be victorious and glorify God to the maximum. Others will go down in flaming defeat, losing all possibility of rewards in time or eternity.

To understand this battleground, we must understand Satan's sin of arrogance, which led to the angelic conflict.

Satan's Revolt Against God

Lucifer, also known as Satan or the devil, rebelled against God and persuaded one third of all the angels to join his revolution by convincing them that he would ultimately defeat God and rule forever. Because all angels already had forever life,[5] their decision to follow Satan rather than God was irrevocable. They decided against God, and God holds them eternally responsible for that decision. This heavenly mutiny divided the angelic creation into two opposing forces: The elect angels who serve God and the fallen angels — demons — who serve Satan. Satan's revolt inaugurated a prehistoric conflict, which continues into the present and will not conclude until the end of human history.

Satan and mankind have only one characteristic in common: Free will. God gave man free will in order to show Satan that he and the other fallen angels will spend eternity in the Lake of Fire because of their own free will. They chose the creature over the Creator. No one forced them to make that decision. They did so of their free will, their volition, just as every man ever created has equal opportunity to use his free will to believe in Christ as his personal Savior. In fact, free will is the only reason that Hell exists. Any man who goes to Hell does so because he chose to go.

Arrogance was the sin that caused Satan's fall from Heaven.

[5] All angels have forever life. Their decision about where to spend that life was made in eternity past when they chose either God or Satan. No subsequent decision can change their ultimate destination of either Heaven or the Lake of Fire.

> How you [Satan] have fallen from Heaven, O star of the morning, son of the dawn! You have been cut down to the earth, you who have weakened the nations! But you said in your heart, "I will ascend to Heaven. I will raise my throne above the stars of God [the angels], and I will sit on the mount of assembly in the recesses of the North. I will ascend above the heights of the clouds. I will make myself like the Most High [God]." Nevertheless, you will be thrust down to Sheol[6] (Isaiah 14:12-15).

As these verses show, Satan said "I will" five times. Each time, his volition operated independently of God. Satan's five assertions of arrogance led to God's judgment of him and to His sentencing of Satan to the Lake of Fire forever. We need to understand Satan's blasphemous attacks of arrogance against God before we can understand the importance of Christian marriage in Satan's plan to overthrow God.

1. "I will ascend to Heaven." The primary Hebrew verb in the first "I will" is alah, which means to ascend, to be lifted up, to pride oneself, to rise up. This word clearly shows that Satan, the most powerful of all angels, was discontent with the almost unlimited power God had given him. The arrogance of power lust gripped him. He began to resent that his power had any limits at all. Once arrogance entered his thoughts, he moved rapidly down the road of self-destruction, willfully distancing himself from the reality of his weaknesses. Satan isn't alone in succumbing to the sin of arrogance. Every believer has to fight against its powerful attraction. Nothing is wrong with being promoted at the right time because under such circumstances God does the promoting; however, grave danger lurks in preoccupation with power. Every believer is easy prey to power lust unless the Word of God protects his soul.
2. "I will raise my throne above the stars of God." Because arrogance had warped his thinking, Satan convinced himself that his power as legitimate head of all the angels was reason for him to have

[6] Sheol or Hades is divided into several compartments. Paradise (Abraham's Bosom) is separated from Torments and Tartarus by the Great Gulf Fixed. The third Heaven (New Paradise) and the Kingdom are also found in Sheol. Sheol is in the heart of the earth.

greater power. Once arrogance allowed power lust to consume his thinking, Satan lost all touch with reality. Arrogance made it easy for him to believe his delusions of grandeur.

3. "I will sit on the mount of assembly." The phrase "mount of assembly" denotes an entire group without exception. Satan wanted authority not only over every single angel but also over the members of the Godhead! He didn't merely want to sit on God's throne; he wanted his own throne raised higher than God's! He wanted God to be under his authority! You may say, "That's ridiculous!" Yes, it is, but do you harbor such thoughts of superiority over others? The backbone of arrogance is in the thought pattern. The apostle Paul warned believers to be mindful of their thoughts.

   > For I say through the grace given to me to every believer among you: Do not think of yourselves more highly than you ought to think but rather think of yourselves objectively and modestly (Romans 12:3a).
   >
   > . . . maintaining the same love . . . intent on one purpose: Do nothing from selfishness [or rivalry] or empty conceit but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves. Do not merely look out for your own personal interests but the not exclusively occupied with his own interests but also for the interests of others (Philippians 2:2-4).

   Arrogance is a mental attitude. Every person is the product of his thought, and God judges our thoughts before He judges our actions. We are not to look down on others, even if we are more qualified than they in everything. When we start thinking of ourselves as better than others, we nurture arrogance in our souls; we become like Satan.

4. "I will ascend above the heights of the cloud." Satan's vision of himself gained momentum with every utterance of arrogance. Every person who allows arrogance into his life becomes self-absorbed and opens the door of his soul wide for other sins to rush in. Gradually, he becomes irrational, unable to think in terms of reality. He turns into the monster of "I will."

5. "I will make myself like the Most High [God]." Here again Satan powers his arrogance with pride. *He* will make himself like God! The pitiful creature Satan seriously believes himself capable of more power than the Creator who made him! Such is the arrogance of Satan — and eventually of mankind — that they forget they wouldn't even exist apart from the gracious hand of almighty God.

The saddest aspect of Satan's entire tragedy is that he will not go down to flaming defeat in the Lake of Fire alone. He campaigned vigorously for his own superiority to God, and he succeeded in convincing one third of all angels to abandon God, thereby drawing them into the Lake of Fire with him (Revelation 12:4). Even though arrogance brought Satan down and will eventually end in his incarceration in the Lake of Fire forever, he has not refrained from trying to convince every human being to try his sin of arrogance for himself.

As we will see later, his next target — and subsequent victim — was Eve and through her, Adam and the rest of the human race; but before we continue, we need to discuss the angelic conflict, which is our reason for being on earth and the reason that Satan so vigorously and viciously attacks marriage.

The Angelic Conflict Explained

In arrogance, Satan revolted against God and convinced one third of all angels to join him. God justly condemned Satan and his followers to the Lake of Fire forever. Obviously, Satan and the fallen angels had no desire to be in flames forever; therefore, Satan immediately appealed God's verdict, and God, our gracious Father, agreed to a retrial. In this retrial, called Satan's appeal trial, Satan must prove that God's plan is worthless in order to prove that he is as great as God and doesn't deserve his sentence to the Lake of Fire. In fact, the name Satan comes from the Greek word *Satanas,* which in turn is derived from an Aramaic word, meaning an adversary in court (Matthew 4:10; Mark 1:13). Another name for Satan is "the devil," from the Greek word *diabolos,* meaning one who casts either himself or something else between two people in order to separate them. In other words, Satan is the false accuser. He wants to come between us and God.

Since the angelic conflict began with the free will of angels, it will be resolved through the free will of men. God created three sets of witnesses against Satan: First, Jesus Christ as the Star Witness, who used His free will to go to the Cross; second, individual witnesses, who use their free will to glorify God to the maximum; and third, Christian marriage as corporate witnesses, two believers who voluntarily advance together hand in hand to spiritual maturity. This corporate testimony of a husband and wife who glorify God together to the maximum is the highest and greatest service that God has ever commanded of believers. Therefore, Satan and his demons lay siege to every Christian home with one purpose only: To dismantle the marriage and thus prove God's plan inferior to his.

Satan's first attack was against the marriage of Adam and Eve. Satan, the deceiver, went into the Garden of Eden and ruined the first marriage. Note that Satan didn't attack Adam before Eve was created. He attacked him indirectly through his marriage.

God responded by ensuring that millions of people would be born, be married, and have similar free will choices. Adam and Eve failed initially, but Adam and Eve ultimately succeeded by responding to the redemption solution. They trusted God for their salvation, and though they initially failed in marriage, they ultimately succeeded. The Cross is the finalizing of redemption because Jesus Christ paid for our salvation in full on the Cross.

Of course, Satan struggles mightily to confuse the issue of redemption. [Satan] comes only to steal and kill and destroy (John 10:10a).

Satan even tries to steal our thoughts by corrupting our thinking about everything, even about Christ's work on the Cross. Religion, a major component of Satan's strategy to become like the most high God, is the system whereby man, by his own efforts and merits, tries to gain salvation or the praise of God. Religion puts man in bondage to Satan; therefore, Satan tries to convince mankind to substitute religion for Christianity. Christianity is God seeking man through the redemptive work of Jesus Christ on the Cross. Christianity is not a religion but a relationship with Jesus Christ, by grace through faith in His redemptive work on the Cross. The apostle Peter warned believers:

> Be vigilant. Be on the alert. Your legal adversary [Satan, your cross-examining attorney who opposes you in his appeal

trial], the devil, is prowling about like a ravenous lion, seeking someone [believers in perpetual carnality] to devour [to bring down to his level of arrogance] (I Peter 5:8).

Satan is desperately hungry because he desperately wants to avoid the Lake of Fire. He is perpetually on the offensive, searching for victims to tear apart and devour. He wants to assimilate us (devour us) into his world, and he can do so only after he has given us the lie and we have swallowed it. Satan preys on Christian marriage because it embodies the union of Christ and the Church. Once Satan rips apart a marriage, he can then devour both husband and wife. Believers can prepare themselves to stand their ground against Satan and his demons only through the consistent study, understanding, and application of doctrine. If we neglect God's truth we become vulnerable to Satan's wily tricks. He will leave us alone only when he has nothing to grab hold of in our marriage, no wedge of dissension or discontent that he can manipulate to his own advantage. Resist him by being steadfast in God's Word (James 4:6-7; Ephesians 6:10-12).

Satan will have no arguments left by the end of the Church Age and the beginning of the Tribulation, not because all believers will have lived the spiritual life, but rather because of those who will have understood God's plan and reached spiritual maturity. The greatest of these believers will have reached the corporate testimony of Christian marriage, which comes through the everyday routine of executing the commonplace together in humility. Both husband and wife must reach spiritual maturity to have a corporate testimony and present evidence that God was just in His sentence of Satan and the fallen angels to the Lake of Fire.

Job

Like a snarling beast hungry for an easy kill, Satan prowls the world. He repeatedly returns to Heaven, arguing before the throne of God that not one human being willingly fulfills God's plan, that God must bribe mankind with abundant blessings before they will respond to Him. Satan's argument forms the basis for the book of Job, in which Satan cross-examined Job, a believer in a pre-Israel generation of the Old Testament whose life glorified God to the

maximum. In spite of several falterings, Job withstood Satan's cruel attacks, praising God's grace and justice even in the midst of tremendous suffering. When Satan began his argument with God by insisting that no one would choose to honor God without first being blessed by God,

> the Lord said to Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job? For there is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man [a man of integrity], fearing God and turning away from evil" (Job 1:8).

God was saying to Satan, "Look at Job. He has chosen to worship and honor Me because of his integrity!"

> Then Satan answered the Lord, "Does Job reverence God without reason? Haven't You made a hedge [impassable, protective wall] encompassing him and his house and all that he has? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land." [In other words, haven't You given him maximum protection and blessing?] (Job 1:9-10)

A theory can be formulated based on Job 1:9. In the past, Satan must have accused God of injustice in sentencing him to the Lake of Fire. Further, he must have asserted that no one would ever serve or worship God apart from God's bribing him. In gracious response to this accusation, God postponed sentencing Satan and the fallen angels to the Lake of Fire. Instead, He created Adam in order to prove to Satan that He is always fair and that His judgment of Satan and the fallen angels was just. Satan continued his attack, concentrating on Job, the greatest believer of his time. Satan arrogantly told God,

> "But stretch out Your hand now and destroy all the blessings that he [Job] has, and he will surely curse You to Your face" (Job 1:9-11).

Satan attacked Job's motivation, contending that Job was a hypocrite who served God only so God would bless him. He alleged

that Job was a coward who led an exemplary life for fear of personal loss. Satan boasted that if God removed the blessings, Job would "curse God to His face." Satan's accusations against Job were an attempt to bolster his own case for his defense in his appeal trial.

Satan lost. God won. God always wins. Satan destroyed every one of Job's blessings: His family, except for his nagging wife, his wealth, and his health; but Job stood fast in his love of God and his service to Him, thereby joining other Old Testament invisible heroes as individual witnesses in Satan's appeal trial. Job's wife, however, was used by Satan to intensify her husband's suffering finally telling Job to curse God and die (Job 2:9).

The Intensification of Satan's Attack During the Flood

When Adam and Eve disobeyed God and ate of the fruit from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, Satan no doubt repeated his favorite lie, "God, I told you that no one would ever worship you apart from bribery." God ignored Satan and graciously presented to Adam and Eve the redemption solution. Furthermore, He underscored His plan by allowing procreation. Millions of men and women would subsequently be born, each with the free will to choose God's plan or ignore it.

Satan intensified his attack to sabotage God's gracious redemption solution. Satan's plan in the pre-Flood era was predictably diabolical. If he could corrupt the pure humanity necessary for Christ to be our Substitute on the Cross, he could make God's redemption solution undeliverable. He almost succeeded. Genesis 6:1-10 recounts how Satan sent fallen angels, called the sons of gods, to cohabit with human women. These demons took the form of powerful handsome males and seduced the women of Earth. Greek mythology describes in part the degeneracy and brutality of this period of history.

Only four purely human marriages, Noah and his wife, and their sons Shem, Ham, and Japheth, and their wives, survived Satan's attack. These marriages saved mankind from satanic corruption and enabled the line of the Savior's perfect humanity to be perpetuated: Noah to Shem, to Israel, to David, to Nathan, to Mary, to Jesus Christ.

God used the Flood to destroy all contaminated mankind. The human race began again with eight purely human beings. Had these

eight people not lived the spiritual life of that time, Jesus Christ could not have been born of a pure human and could not have provided the redemption solution that ensures our salvation. Satan would have won the angelic conflict. (But we've peeked at the end of the book, and we know that Satan loses. In his arrogance, Satan continues to think that he can rewrite history. Many people, including believers without a biblical world view, agree with him! Beware of them! Remember that Satan and his demons are always on the prowl, scheming to destroy and delude you with their seductive lies.)

Divine Institutions

Since the Flood, God has preserved civilization through the divine institutions of marriage, family, and nations. (The first divine institution was free will.) Satan attacks these institutions in order to destroy mankind and save himself from the Lake of Fire. God punishes anyone who breaks the laws that govern His divine institutions. No one breaks God's laws and gets away with it! The divine institution of marriage is part of God's plan relating to the perpetuation of the human race so that families and nations can exist with order. Christian marriage is the pivot for prosperity or suffering in a nation. As goes marriage in a nation, so goes the nation.

God's answer to Satan's demonic attack against marriage before the Flood was physical, the inundation and destruction of all contaminated human beings. Christian marriage is the spiritual answer to that demonic attack. In the devil's world today, the greatest satanic attack is on Christian marriage because a husband and wife who reach spiritual maturity have the greatest impact for his destruction. You can count on your marriage being under constant attack from Satan and his minions. Their goal is to destroy any possibility of a corporate testimony against them.

Satan also attacks Christian marriage because it is the divine answer to the failure of the first marriage in the Garden of Eden. The first marriage, that of Adam and Eve, failed. The second marriage, that of Christ and the Church and that of a Christian husband and his wife, is God's answer to Satan's unrelenting attacks on marriage throughout human history. Satan's last argument against God is destroyed by every successful Christian marriage.

While the angelic conflict was resolved by the Star Witness, Jesus Christ, who died on the Cross as our perfect Substitute, the corporate

testimony of Christian marriage remains of supreme importance, nailing the lid on the coffin of Satan's defeat. You can see why it is so important to consistently study the Bible daily, preferably from a pastor who teaches the entirety of Scripture without prejudice or compromise, so you can be an effective witnesses for God. Believers who fail to do so are easily influenced by Satan and the world.

The Church Age is Satan's last opportunity to prove that God's plan is a failure. Hence, Christian marriage takes on an importance that marriage never had in the past. Whenever any couple succeeds in marriage by reaching spiritual maturity together, the elect angels cheer while Satan and the fallen angels bite their tongues in desperation. They are one witness closer to incarceration forever in the Lake of Fire.

Satan views the mature Christian as well equipped to defeat his schemes. Two mature married Christians are much more than doubly dangerous to his plan because their witness, a corporate testimony, is the most effective witness possible. If Satan can prevent every Christian marriage from reaching this stage, he can prevent this powerful witness against him; therefore, the corporate testimony of marriage is attained by only a small number of people in each generation, those who repel the attacks of Satan through their relationship with Jesus Christ and the daily study of His Word. When a husband and wife who are on their way to a corporate testimony fail (and we all fail over and over), they must immediately acknowledge their sins to God and keep advancing together despite those around them who have fallen under Satan's ruthless attacks. Victory in marriage glorifies God to the maximum.

Chapter Three

Creation & the Fall of Mankind

One major reason that believers in the Lord Jesus Christ don't enjoy marriage is because they don't understand the distinctions God created between man and woman. When they understand the unique roles of each as ordained by God, they are more likely to live together in harmony and mutual respect; therefore, we are going to examine briefly the creation of mankind. We've already learned the first principle, that man was created for the resolution of the prehistoric angelic conflict. The second principle is that mankind exists because of God's initiation of grace. Man at his best is nothing but the chemical components of the soil. King David, in comprehension of the inferiority of man, wrote,

> What is man, that You take thought of him, the son of man that You care for him? (Psalm 8:4)

The answer, of course, is nothing. Everything we have, everything we are is because of God's grace. The body of man constitutes the dust of the earth; his soul, the handiwork of God; and his breath, the breath of God (Genesis 2:7).

Right Man / Right Woman

God created the first man, Adam, perfect without an Old Sin Nature; therefore, man was originally God-centered. He was preoccupied with the truth that our Lord taught him in the Garden of Eden every evening. He resided in perfect environment in a state of innocence. And yet he felt alone. God saw the need to complement man by providing him with a partner:

> Then the Lord God said, "It is not good [Hebrew: *towb*: pleasant, sound] for the mature man to be alone. I will make him a helper suitable for him" (Genesis 2:18).

The Hebrew word for "helper," *azar*, is used 80 times in the Old Testament for military assistance and support, not the main

military force but the auxiliary support unit. The Holy Spirit's use of this particular word in reference to the wife indicates that from the beginning she was made to assist and support her husband.

"Suitable" is the Hebrew word *neged*, meaning "the other part that fits with the existing part, the one corresponding to him, the one appointed for him." To fill the male's deficiencies, God designed a creature who was like him in many ways, yet different in that she complemented him. Neither male nor female is superior, but each fulfills different roles and functions that are not interchangeable. Neither is perfect, but they are perfect for each other. From the beginning, God designed for every man a perfect counterpart: his own woman.

> Let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband (I Corinthians 7:2).

The Song of Solomon beautifully conveys the concept of one God-designed man for each woman.

> Set me as a seal [Hebrew: *chotam*: signet ring] upon your heart [your thinking] and as a seal upon your arm [your strength] (Song of Solomon 8:6a).

At the time this verse was written, a seal was a signet ring that a woman wore around her neck, usually suspended on a leather thong, chain, or string of the right length to nestle between her breasts. The ring signified her understanding that only one man could fulfill her, that he would one day wear the ring, and that the ring would fit him. She knew that all she had of value could be given to one man only, the owner of the ring, and she was willing to wait for him. The seal was set first on his heart because soul love must come before physical love. It was then set upon his arm because a woman is strengthened by her relationship with her right man. The use of a ring in a wedding ceremony originated in this ancient practice and continues to signify enduring love.

Because soul love is as important and as individualistic as physical love, no two women have the same soul. Even the woman's soul was designed by God in eternity past for only one man to fulfill. The right man fulfills each facet of her soul:

1. Self-consciousness: He goes into her soul, and she can't get rid of him. She may hate him at times, and she may love him at times — but he's there! God designed him to be there always.
2. Mentality and conscience: She can't get him out of her thoughts. Someone else may come along and enter her mind for a moment, but he goes right on through and out again. Thoughts of her right man remain.
3. Volition: She wants to please and honor this man. She respects him, obeys him, and becomes his glory.

Building the Woman

The first man, Adam, had the privilege of having his counterpart formed from a part of his own body, his rib.

> 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 the place. And the Lord God built [Hebrew: *banah:* built] a woman from the rib that He had taken from the man, and He brought her to the man (Genesis 2:21-22).

The "deep sleep" which God caused to fall on Adam is tantamount to a general anesthetic so that Adam would feel no pain as his rib was separated from his body. The idea of anesthetics during surgery is new to modern-day medicine but not to God. He invented it. He caused Adam to sleep while He performed the first surgery on him. Modern medicine is celebrating what God invented in eternity past and used on the first man in history!

Adam was created out of the dust of the earth, but his counterpart, the woman, was fashioned from existing material, his own body. The chemical structure of a woman's body was designed to be totally different from that of a man's. The English word beauty is derived from the Hebrew word *banah,* meaning built from existing material, used exclusively in the formation of the woman. All mankind is fearfully and wonderfully made, but the woman's physical body is beautified as well.

As we have previously discussed, the principle of right man/right woman applies to believers and unbelievers alike. Compatibility comes from finding one's own rib; therefore, the unbeliever who

finds his right partner enjoys his marriage. Indeed, this happiness is the closest an unbeliever can come to having any real happiness in this life — the rapport that God has created between every right man and his right woman in marriage.

> Enjoy life [all aspects of the body and soul] with [your right] woman whom you love all the days of your fleeting life [vanity], which He has given to you under the sun, for this is your reward (Ecclesiastes 9:9).

Many unbelievers enjoy their marriages more than believers because they follow God's laws for marriage. They may not recognize them as God's laws, but they abide by them nonetheless. Consideration, respect, thoughtfulness, forgiveness, and faithfulness are the basis of their love and their marriage. However, no matter how great an unbeliever's happiness in marriage, that happiness ends when he departs from this world because he will be spending eternity in the Lake of Fire.

When the woman Eve was ready, God brought her to her man. God could have allowed her to wander around in the Garden until Adam found her, but He did not. He brought the first woman to the first man, just as He brings every right woman to every right man who waits for His perfect timing. This is God's standard operating procedure for marriage: The man waits on the Lord and at the right time God brings the woman to him.

Adam immediately recognized that this woman was perfect for him. Adam recognized Eve as the one who completed him physically, mentally, soulishly, in all ways.

> The Lord [Jesus Christ] has created a new thing [Eve out of Adam's rib] on the earth. A female [Hebrew: *neqebah:* emphasizing the female body] shall fit [embrace or encompass] a hero [her right man] (Jeremiah 31:22).

A right woman responds to her right man, is fulfilled by him, and fulfills him. Her response to him is intense, physical, sexual, and glorious! Sexually, they fit only each other, and they fit perfectly. Skeleton keys damage the lock. Sex before marriage even between right man/right woman also damages the lock. Only sex within the

confines of marriage unlocks the door to immeasurable happiness. When the woman encompasses her right man, he is no longer just a male; he is her hero — her right man!

As soon as God created Eve, He united her with Adam in marriage. God created husband and wife, because marriage has the potential to provide the most damaging witnesses against Satan in his appeal trial. Thus, from the beginning, Adam and Eve shared the perfect status called marriage. (If you're saying to yourself, "Perfect marriage! Impossible!" keep reading. Remember that God designed marriage; therefore, it is perfect. We are the ones who ruin it by not executing God's perfect plan as He intended.)

The Rib

The rib that God took from Adam is important because it underscores the concept of right man/right woman. God could have formed the woman in the same manner He formed Adam, or He could have formed her in a million other ways, but He chose to take something from the man, leaving a vacuum which could be filled only when the rib returned in the form of his right woman. This is grace in operation!

God created the original man totally apart from any woman. Man in the person of Adam did not depend upon woman for his existence, but woman was created out of man. Without him, she would not have come into being. The implication is that the wife is given a support role in the plan of God. We see many strong women in the Bible, but a fierce spirit of independence and feminism puts a woman at cross-purposes with God's plan. A supporting spirit, however, is appropriate and attractive for the wife and puts her in step with God's plan.

Woman was created from man's side to be his companion, from his rib to be under the arm of his protection, and near to his heart to be the object of his love. Note that she was not created from his head to rule over him or from his foot to be trodden down by him. She was created for him: To support him, to benefit him, and to fill the deficiencies in his life.

Adam was left permanently without a rib; therefore, a man without a woman is incomplete. Only one specific woman can fulfill him. Not only is he not independent of women, but he can't exist

wholly apart from his right woman. In fact, he must depend on her for the procreation of the human race. In essence, his rib is brought back to him through sex when he and his wife become one flesh.

> And the man said, "At last! Bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh. She shall be called woman because she was taken out of man" (Genesis 2:23).

Since the Fall, man owes his origin, his existence, and his fulfillment to womankind. Two women in his life keep him from being an animal, responsive only to his Old Sin Nature: His mother, who trains him, and his wife, who fulfills him.

> Besides, neither is woman apart from man nor man apart from woman by the Lord. For just as the woman is out from the source of man, even so also the man through the woman. But all things [mother and then right woman] are out from the source of God (I Corinthians 11:11-12).

The Fall

Jesus Christ performed the wedding of Adam and Eve in the perfect environment of the Garden of Eden. At that time, Adam was ruler of the world and ruler in marriage. Eve gladly acquiesced to his authority. They lived in the Garden in perfect harmony, learning truth from Jesus Christ Himself. They were God-centered.

You remember that all mankind was given free will. In the case of Adam and Eve, their only testing came in the form of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. God commanded them not to eat of the fruit of it. Of course, Satan also knew of this prohibition, and he was determined to turn Adam and Eve against God. He came to the Garden in the guise of a serpent, at that time the most beautiful of all creatures, and he ingratiated himself into Eve's life. He talked to her, flattered her and confused her.

> Now the serpent [Satan] 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, "We may eat from the fruit of the trees of the Garden; 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'" (Genesis 3:1-3).

When Satan asked Eve about the trees of the Garden, she should have paused to remember God's words and then replied accurately, "Yes, the Lord God said that we should not eat from it." Instead, she added to the Word of God, saying that God had commanded that she not eat from it or *touch it*. She even confused the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil with the Tree of Life, which actually grew in the middle of the garden! Once Eve misinterpreted God's Word by adding to it and confusing it, Satan knew that he could capitalize on that. She was ripe to be corrupted.

> And the serpent said to the woman, "You surely shall not die [if you eat the fruit]! 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" (Genesis 3:4-5).

Do you notice anything familiar in these verses? Satan took his sin of arrogance to Eve! In his cunning, cleverness, and deceit, he sold his sin of arrogance, and Eve unwittingly bought it. (I Timothy 2:14) With that simple but arrogant promise of equality with God, Satan destroyed Eve's marvelous and unparalleled rapport and fellowship with God.

Satan's attitude since *his* fall has been: I can no longer have rapport with God; therefore, you can't either. Power lust, the fruit of arrogance and Satan's overriding sin, always drags along calamity and invites maximum discipline from the Courtroom of Heaven.

> 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 it and ate (Genesis 3:6).

By the time his conversation with Eve had ended, Satan had a new convert who had disobeyed God, eaten of the fruit, and instantly died spiritually. Immediately after sinning, Eve knew that she had changed. She was no longer in a state of innocence. Her nakedness was revealed and shamed her. Not wanting to remain in spiritual death by herself, she handed Adam the fruit. He could see

that she had changed, that she had lost the glow of inner beauty that came from innocence, that she was spiritually dead. He knew that he would die spiritually, too, if he ate of the fruit. He knew that God was fair and that He would be forced to punish any sin of disobedience. But Eve was beautiful and she was his soulmate. She was bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh. Adam had to choose, he loved her more than he loved God; and so he willfully disobeyed God, took the fruit from her hand, and ate of it.

At that moment of sin, Adam, too, became spiritually dead. He and the woman were now self-centered and preoccupied with themselves. They were no longer God-centered and occupied with Him. Satan had won the first battle of the angelic conflict.

From that moment in the Garden of Eden until now, Satan hasn't ceased trying to ruin every marriage! He takes a little truth, and twists it into a false concept, just as he did with Eve. Only believers who are spiritually mature can avoid the traps designed by Satan to destroy their marriage.

The Old Sin Nature

The only channel Satan can use to get to the believer is the Old Sin Nature, and he uses it to accomplish his objective with regard to marriage — to bring about unhappiness, separation, and divorce. Divorce may be his ultimate goal, but unhappiness serves his purpose equally well. An unhappy person is unable to glorify God and execute God's plan for his life.

One of the disastrous results of the fall of Adam was the imputation of the Old Sin Nature to our bodies at birth. Adam was not deceived by Satan's glib lies and skewing of the truth as Eve was. Adam sinned knowing full well that he was sinning; therefore, Adam bears sole responsibility for the Old Sin Nature coming into the human race.

> Therefore, just as through one man [Adam] sin entered into the world, and death through sin, so death spread to all men because all sinned (Romans 5:12).

Because of Adam, every father through his sperm gives his child an Old Sin Nature. When a child is born, he enters into this world with sin as part of every cell of his body (Psalm 51:5). This

sin is referred to as the "sinful nature" in Romans 7:18b, "flesh" in II Corinthians 1:12, "old self" in Romans 6:6, and the "old man" in Ephesians 4:22. All personal sin originates from this Old Sin Nature, which is acquired by every human being at birth. Jesus Christ is the only exception because, though He is true humanity, He was born of a virgin; therefore, He had no human father, and He did not receive an Old Sin Nature in His cell structure.

Just because we are born again into the family of God (Galatians 3:26) does not mean that we have lost the Old Sin Nature. Indeed, the spiritual birth that occurs when we trust in Christ creates a spiritual battle within our souls, the Holy Spirit against the Old Sin Nature. When we sin, the Old Sin Nature controls our souls. When we confess after we sin, the Holy Spirit controls our souls through His filling. Only when we are filled with the Holy Spirit are we able to please God through the application of His Word. Only through our free will can we choose to be filled with the Holy Spirit, thereby suppressing the power of the Old Sin Nature.

One gate gives access to our soul, and all our thoughts and intentions must go through that gate. The Old Sin Nature and the Holy Spirit battle for control of that gate. We either have the power of the Holy Spirit in our souls, or Satan is manifested in our souls through the Old Sin Nature. Keep in mind that until we sin the Old Sin Nature remains in our bodies, powerless but prepared to grab our souls. Only through sin does the Old Sin Nature enter our souls and gain control over us. Whenever the Old Sin Nature controls our souls through unconfessed sin, we can be easily overpowered to do that which we would not have done under the control of the Holy Spirit. Under the power of the Old Sin Nature, our spiritual life and any possibility of a corporate testimony are threatened. Only when God the Holy Spirit is in our souls do we have His power to live the spiritual life and enjoy marriage to the maximum.

Your free will determines whether Satan or God the Holy Spirit controls your soul. You are the only one who can choose to succeed in your spiritual life and your marriage. Make that choice wisely, day by day, moment by moment. In the very moment that you neglect, your spiritual life, you've opened a crack invisible to you but wide enough for Satan to gain a toehold into your soul. His claws are vicious. Don't give him any opportunity to dig them into your soul and destroy your opportunity for a corporate testimony in marriage.

Chapter Four

Authority in Marriage: Arrogance Versus Humility

We are going to discuss authority in marriage before we discuss love because love is impossible without the correct application of authority by both husband and wife.

Authority is protection from arrogance and the foundation for freedom and civilization; therefore, God has never created any institution of any kind without also creating the proper authority to go with it. Authority can be abused, but abuse of authority doesn't cancel the principle of authority. God's command to submit to proper authority in every facet of life, including the wife to her husband in marriage, is crystal clear throughout the Scriptures.

> Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities which exist have been established by God. Consequently, he who rebels against authority [of any kind] is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves (Romans 13:1-3).

> Remind the people [believers] to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready to do whatever is good (Titus 3:1).

> Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every authority [without exception] instituted among men: Whether to the king, as the supreme authority, or to governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right (I Peter 2:13-14).

As a believer, you must comply completely with anyone who has authority over you — husband, parents, coach, teacher, boss, police, local, state and federal officials, anyone — regardless of how

unfairly they treat you. Why? Because God is the One who put them in authority over you. If necessary, He in His justice will take away their authority at the proper time. In the meantime, trust Him to take care of you. Keep your eyes on the Lord so you have the strength of soul to endure all authority with patience, even joy. If you fail to comply with authority, you lack the stability of soul attained initially through salvation, reinforced through the daily study of God's Word, and quickly confessing sins to restore the filling of the Holy Spirit.

God is the One who gave the man authority over the woman. That authority was foreshadowed in the Garden of Eden when God gave Adam authority to:

> Rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth (Genesis 1:26).

Man exercised his authority by naming every animal that God created (Genesis 2:19).

When God formed Eve from Adam's rib, He extended Adam's authority to include his wife, making man the ruler of his wife in everything. As first demonstrated by Eve's capitulation to the wiles of the serpent, women are more prone than men to being deceived and wandering from the truth. God *protects* women by putting them under the authority and protection of their husbands.

Because Adam did not exert his authority over Eve and curtail her involvement with the serpent, he failed the first test of his rulership. God took away his rulership of the world; however, He allowed man to retain authority in marriage.

Every marriage has a chain of responsibility. No husband can expect his wife to be under his authority if he isn't first under the authority of God. No wife can expect her children to obey her if she doesn't respect the authority of her husband. Authority is like a hand grenade. If mishandled, if the pin is pulled, even inadvertently, it will explode and cause immense damage. A marriage succeeds or fails depending on the attitude toward authority of both husband and wife as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ.

A husband has the responsibility of setting wise policy, combining his authority with virtue, and leading with honor. He doesn't have to do anything to establish his authority because he already has it as a

direct command from God. The wife has the responsibility to gladly submit to her husband's authority and treat him with respect.

Because the husband is the authority, the success of a marriage rests in his leadership. On the other hand, a wife's ability to execute her mandate to respect her husband depends on her attitude toward Jesus Christ and the Word of God; however the husband's leadership makes it easier for her to fulfill the Lord's mandate.

Tyranny exists when a husband uses his authority to restrict his wife's freedom. To avoid tyranny, he must have integrity and love his wife as Christ loved the Church. Anarchy exists when a wife rejects her husband's authority. To avoid anarchy, she must respect him. If she can't respect him because he is without integrity, she must respect the plan of God for her life, which includes obedience to her husband.

Authority and submission to authority require virtue. A Christian gains virtue through the filling of the Holy Spirit, consistent learning and applying of God's Word under the rulership of Christ as the head of the Church.

A husband with virtue is the guardian, protector, provider, and encourager of the body and soul of his wife. He takes on himself that which his wife shouldn't have to bear. A wife with virtue appreciates her husband's care of her and respects his authority.

A husband, who uses his authority as he should, stands in front of his wife, leading her to spiritual maturity, protecting her from the worst assaults of Satan against her and against their marriage. The Word of God in his soul gives him the strength and knowledge to lead with virtue. Marriage is the highest testing ground in which man demonstrates virtue to the angels.

Arrogance

God gives authority to the man to benefit the woman in marriage. No woman, even an unruly one, can destroy her husband's authority. But he can distort it through mental attitude sins such as arrogance. Arrogant men often think that just because they are men they are meant to intimidate and rule women. This concept is not biblical, and no single shred of evidence from the Scriptures supports such an erroneous assumption.

Did you know that a husband's treatment of his wife directly influences the effectiveness of their prayers? If you are a husband who abuses your authority over your wife, pray no more, for your prayers will not be answered! (I Peter 3:7) You are out of fellowship with God!

Arrogance, the worst sin and the basis of all other sins, destroys the structure of authority, not just in marriage but in life as well. Pride and arrogance march toward each other, and when they meet, they destroy the soul of the individual who invited them and attract the wrath of God. God disciplines anyone who harbors arrogance in his soul.

> He [God] gives greater grace; therefore, it says [Proverbs 3:34], "God makes war against the arrogant believer, but He gives grace to the humble believer." Humble yourselves before God (James 4:6, 10).

> Everyone who is arrogant is an abomination to the Lord; be assured that he [the arrogant believer] will not go unpunished (Proverbs 16:5).

The prophet Isaiah echoed:

> I [God] will punish the world for its evil and the wicked for their sins. I will put an end to the arrogance of the haughty and will humble the pride of the ruthless (Isaiah 13:11).

Indeed, arrogance abuses and destroys the true concept of authority. An arrogant man is incapable of loving any woman, even his wife. An arrogant woman is incapable of respecting anyone, even her husband. Arrogance makes fellowship with God impossible for both of them.

Humility

Humility, the opposite of arrogance, is not self-effacement but thoughtfulness for others, poise and courage under pressure, and recognition of authority. Capacity for true love is possible only for those who have humility because humility is the basis for gratitude and appreciation. The establishment of right priorities and the ability

to resist temptations and distractions are functions of humility. The Hebrew word for humility is *anawah,* and its Greek equivalent is the somewhat long word, *tapeinophrosune.* "The meaning of humility shades off in different directions, but the central thoughts are lowliness, meekness, modesty, mildness, freedom from pride."[7] Humility is a matter of a relaxed mental attitude toward all mankind and every circumstance in life.

Thus says the high and exalted One who lives forever, whose name is Holy:

> I dwell on a high and holy place and also with the contrite [Hebrew: dakka: bruised, humbled, broken in spirit — in a state in which God can mold them] (Isaiah 57:15).

The end product of humility is always our exaltation. Concerning this glorious exaltation, the apostle Peter wrote,

> Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time (I Peter 5:6).

Luke recorded our Lord saying,

> For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted (Luke 18:14b).

Where no humility exists, no true respect for authority exists. Miriam, the sister of Moses, revolted against Moses' divinely given authority.

> Miriam and Aaron began to talk against Moses ". . . has the Lord spoken only through Moses?" they asked. [Who does Moses think he is? Does he think he's special? He's not any better than we are!] And the Lord heard this. Now Moses was a very humble man, more humble than anyone else on the face of the earth. At once the Lord said to Moses, Aaron, and Miriam, "Come out of the meeting tent, all three of you [for an emergency meeting]." So the three of them came out [including the arrogant bigmouth Miriam]. Then the Lord

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[7] Tenney, Merril C. ed, *Pictorial Bible Dictionary*
The Southwestern Company, Nashville, TN 1975

> came down in a pillar of cloud. He stood at the entrance to the tent and summoned Aaron and Miriam. When both of them stepped forward, He said, "Listen to My words! When a prophet of the Lord is among you, I reveal Myself to him in visions. I speak to him in dreams. But this is not true of My servant Moses. He is faithful in all My house. With him I speak face to face, clearly and not in riddles. He sees the form of the Lord. Why then weren't you afraid to speak against My servant Moses?" The anger of the Lord burned against them, and He left them. When the cloud lifted from above the tent, there stood Miriam — leprous, like snow (Numbers 12:1-10).

Miriam's revolt against the authority of Moses led to severe punishment from God — leprosy, one of the most disfiguring, repugnant, and deadly diseases of that time. Our punishment for disobedience to God's laws of authority is equally harsh if not equally visible. The apostle Paul asked,

> For who regards you as superior? And what do you have that you did not receive? (I Corinthians 4:7a)

Everything we have is directly from the gracious hand of God. Any rewards, promotions, or accolades are from Him alone, though man may have been the vehicle for our receiving them. The right and responsibility of authority is one of God's greatest blessings to the male. In order for him to exert his authority with virtue, he first must subject himself under the authority of God, thereby screening out anything that could feed pride into his soul.

Humility is the beginning of wisdom. The humble believer understands that any successes in life are a matter of the grace of God; therefore, he gives God the glory. He knows that he has been left on earth for one purpose only, to glorify God to the maximum. He recognizes that the woman given to him by God was given in grace; therefore, he treats her with dignity and respect. He knows that his authority in marriage and all other aspects of life is not something he can work for, earn or deserve, nor did God give him this authority simply because he has greater physical strength. Rather, God by means of His grace and because of reasons best known to Him, He

handed over this authority to the man. Authority is a grace gift to be cherished, not a right to be abused.

Submission by the Woman

A Christian woman is designed by God to respond to five authorities in her life: The Word of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, her pastor-teacher, her father, and her husband. When she marries, the authority of her father is passed to her husband. The authority of the Word of God, of the Lord Jesus Christ, and of her pastor-teacher should remain as constants throughout her life.

A believing wife who tries to develop a submissive/respecting attitude toward her husband but rejecting the authority of God found in the Word of God and taught by her pastor-teacher may have establishment happiness just like an unbeliever, but she will not come close to sharing the happiness of God. In order to fulfill God's plan for her, she must have a relaxed mental attitude of trust and confidence in God, believing that He has designed these five authorities for her happiness and fulfillment and for the protection of her soul. Then, in genuine humility, she is able to respond to her husband because of the devotion she has for her Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

While it is true that a woman is a responder in her soul, it is equally true that she is free to select to whom or what she will respond. She is free to respond properly and develop femininity or to react and rebel against authority and create her own misery. The Lord Jesus Christ protects her freedom to respond to the Word of God and to Himself and thus go beyond mere human femininity. Every woman makes her own choices without coercion from God or anyone else, including her husband.

Every woman should seek refuge in the authorities in her life: First, in her father, her church, God's Word, and in occupation with Christ, and secondly, at the proper time, in her husband. In doing so, she becomes content in her femaleness and oriented toward herself as a woman and a responder. Furthermore, she understands that the Lord is the One who gave authority over her to her father and then transferred that authority to her husband. If a woman doesn't accept the authority that God has provided that she can see — her father and then her husband — God will use His authority that cannot be seen — His divine discipline.

> Let the wife see to it that she respect her husband (Ephesians 5:33b).

One might expect to read, "Wives, love your husbands." Why did God not command wives to love their husbands? The reasons are simple. First, a wife automatically *will* love her husband if he is her right man. Second, God designed her to be a responder, to respond to her husband's authority with respect. When a wife rejects his authority, she opposes God (Romans 13:1-3); and, consequently, she is immediately under divine punishment (Hebrews 12:6) until she confesses her sin and mends her ways. Let me repeat: She has created her own unhappiness, she and no one else.

The Greek word *hupotasso,* translated "be subject to" in Colossians 3:18, means to place in orderly fashion or in submission. Originally, this word indicated one's relation to a superior, either in compulsory or voluntary subordination. God the Holy Spirit directed the apostle Paul to use the word *hupotasso,* thereby indicating that both compulsion and voluntary subordination are expected from a wife. Her subordination to her husband is compulsory in the sense that she is under a direct command from God to obey her husband in all things. Her subordination is voluntary because she submits joyfully, knowing that she is fulfilling the plan of God for her life.

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

The Scriptures never command a wife to love her husband, but rather to be submissive to him, to respect him. Because a woman is a responder, not an aggressor, she is designed to wait quietly in her soul in anticipation of her husband's actions and words so that she can respond. If her husband treats her with respect, honor, and dignity, she will respond with submission, respect, and admiration. If the reverse is true, chances are she will react with apathy, disrespect, and disobedience. That's because the opposite of response is reaction. A wife can't *respond* due to her husband's abuse of authority; therefore, in such cases she must submit to virtue love for him and personal love for God.

A wonderful correlation is true: A wife who respects her husband inspires him to leadership. Though his own spiritual life produces

his leadership, it is ineffective without his wife's respect. Sadly, since the average Christian man is not spiritually mature, many Christian women find it extremely difficult to respect their husbands.

Many wives find it difficult to place themselves totally under the authority of their husbands; however, the most dignified thing in the sight of God and the elect angels is a wife who constantly humbles herself under the God-given authority of her husband. The Lord Jesus Christ subordinated Himself by becoming humanity and going to the Cross; therefore, a woman should realize that subordination to the legitimate authority of her husband is a solemn responsibility that God has given her.

> In the same way, you wives, it is to your benefit to remain under the authority of your own husbands . . . (I Peter 3:1a).

The souls of male and female are as different as their physical bodies. God designed him to be the initiator and her to be the responder. When Eve usurped the role of initiator, Adam succumbed, and they both died spiritually. No woman should ever take for herself that which God gave to man.

That is not to say that any woman is inferior to any man. Both have equal souls in the sight of God. Both have equal opportunity and equal privilege to live the spiritual life just as Adam and Eve did in the Garden of Eden when Jesus Christ taught them directly. Both have spiritual equality to fulfill all potentials of their love and to live the spiritual life together.

A wife must willingly subordinate herself to her husband's destiny, putting his job, his desires, and his needs above her own. His future is their future. She must respect him as the head of their family and not make an issue of her own wishes. Because she respects him, she does what he says even if she disagrees. He may be wrong, but so may she. Children learn disrespect from a mother who doesn't respect and obey her husband.

A woman can have authority over men in all fields of endeavor except the ministry, evangelism, and marriage. She can be principal of a school and exercise her authority over every student, including males. She can run a business, even a corporation. However, the moment she steps into her home, she is under the authority of her husband in all things, and the moment she steps into her church, she is

under the authority of her pastor-teacher. This transition from giving authority to receiving it can be difficult to make, and only a woman with maximum Bible doctrine in her soul can do so without loss of her femininity. She must remember also that her husband's authority extends into all aspects of her life and that fulfilling his wishes and submitting to him in all things must be her overruling desire.

A wife's authority is less than her husband's, but a wise wife thanks God that He has placed her under her husband's care and provision. Her humility is not a pious recitation of subjection, of "Yes, sir," "No, sir," and "As you please, sir," but a matter of the condition of her soul. Words mean little. She can say, "Yes, sir," to her husband and yet wish that he would take his last breath. Her words do not reveal humility; the condition of her soul does, and only God can accurately discern the soul.

While angels can't see a woman's submissive soul, they can see her actions and the words that reflect her adherence to God's plan for her life. The litmus test of her spiritual life is found in her attitude toward the authority of her husband. A wife who ignores or repudiates the authority of her husband is a wife who is failing miserably in her spiritual life. Any wife who questions her husband's right to authority over her is duplicating the sin of arrogance committed by Satan, Miriam, and countless other believers since the beginning of time. Instead, she should emulate the humility of our only Role Model, Jesus Christ.

The Humility of Jesus Christ

When the decision was made in eternity past for the Son to go to the Cross and be judged by God the Father, He could have said, "God the Father, who do You think You are? Am I not equal with You? Why should I be the One to demean Myself by becoming man and suffering on the Cross?" Christ uttered no such words. Instead, He gladly agreed to go to the Cross and suffer as a substitute for every sinner who will ever live — in other words for every *person* who will ever live. The supreme command in the Word of God with regard to humility is the command to duplicate the humility of our Lord Jesus Christ, the exact mental attitude that God intends both husband and wife to have.

> Have this [mental] attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself [of that power], taking the form of a bondservant [Greek: *doulos* : slave, one who is in permanent servitude to another, his will altogether consumed in the will of the other] and being made in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even the death on a cross. Therefore, also God highly exalted Him and bestowed on Him the Name that is above every name (Philippians 2:5-9).

God the Son willingly made Himself the bondservant to God the Father. In just such a way must a husband willingly submit himself to God and a wife willingly submit herself to her husband. This attitude produces peace and happiness in the marriage of two humble believers.

How can we emulate so great a humility? Obviously, humility begins in the mind. We have Christ's humility when we think as He thinks. We have Satan's arrogance when we think as he thinks, when we buy his lies. The Bible tells us: We *have* the thinking of Christ (I Corinthians 2:16b).

How do we have it? The thinking of Christ is in every word of the Bible. But the Bible does us no good on the shelf. It does us no good if we merely read it. It must be in our souls. Studying God's Word must be our priority regardless of our circumstances, no matter how pressing our worldly obligations.

> If you have a wife, be as if you haven't one. [Don't let marriage be a distraction from the spiritual life.] Those who weep be as if they don't weep. [Don't let real problems overwhelm you and distract you from the spiritual life.] And those who rejoice be as if they don't rejoice [Don't forget that the source of your prosperity is God. Continue to grow in grace.] (I Corinthians 7:29b, 30a).

Study the whole Bible, especially the epistles which reveal the mystery doctrines of the Church Age. Pay attention even when your

pastor-teacher is explaining doctrines of no seeming relevance to you. God put that information in the Bible; therefore, you need to know it. A successful marriage is built on the full scope of Bible teaching, not just teaching about marriage. A husband and wife must constantly expose themselves to sound biblical teaching about every facet of the spiritual life, believe those doctrines, process them into their souls through the enabling power of God the Holy Spirit, and apply them consistently.

> For this reason, therefore, since we keep on being surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses [both human and angelic], let us throw off every impediment [distractions to the daily intake of Bible doctrine] and the sin that so easily ensnares us. Let us run with perseverance [endurance] the race marked out for us [in the angelic conflict] to the present objective [maximum glorification of God and a corporate testimony]. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the Originator and Perfecter of our doctrine, who, because of His exhibited happiness, endured the Cross, scorning its shame [of sin]. Then He sat down at the right hand of the throne of God, in the place of highest honor. Keep thinking about Him who endured such opposition by sinners against Himself in order that you do not become fatigued and lose heart (Hebrews 12:1-3).

The whole point of this passage is "Don't fail the grace of God." If you are ever going to have the ultimate happiness, peace, blessing, and joy that God has prepared for you in marriage and in life, it will be through His grace. If you don't turn away from the Lord or become indifferent to Bible teaching, you will follow the road God has set before you to glory. Through the humility which recognizes God's grace in all things, you and your spouse will attain a corporate testimony and have immeasurable blessings both on earth and in Heaven.

> By means of your perseverance [in the execution of the spiritual life], you will preserve control of your souls [in the uncontrollable circumstances of life] (Luke 21:19).

In order to fulfill the Father's plan for the Incarnation, Christ submitted Himself to the excruciating agony of the Cross. The

judgment of our sins in His own body was the most intense suffering ever experienced by any member of the human race. He was able to endure the Cross because He possessed maximum love for His Father and total knowledge of the Word of God. No diversionary tactic of the enemy succeeded in turning His face from His objective. Submission to God the Father and His plan kept Jesus Christ from reacting to the pain and suffering inflicted on Him on earth.

> By Myself I [Jesus Christ as true humanity] can do nothing. I judge only as I hear, and My judgment is just, for I seek not to please Myself but Him who sent Me (John 5:30).

This is humility and submission at its most magnificent! Thus, He set the pattern that enables a husband and wife to endure the pressures of life and put the Lord first. Husband and wife must persevere together in the daily learning, and application of Bible truth thereby advancing together to the maximum witness of a corporate testimony.

> Do not be discouraged because if you keep on persevering [taking in Bible doctrine], you will reap in due season (Galatians 6:9).

A husband and wife who grow together spiritually reap blessings together for time and eternity because of their testimony in the angelic conflict on earth. Their harvest of blessings overflows to their children, their associates, and their nation. Their "cup overflows" (Psalm 23) even to future generations who will reap the benefits of their spiritual maturity.

If Your Spouse is a Carnal Believer or an Unbeliever

Some of you reading this are thinking to yourselves, "But my husband is a carnal believer whose lifestyle does not match divine principles." Or "My husband isn't even a believer. What should I do?" The answer to this question as with all questions is found in the Scriptures.

> In the same way, you wives, it is to your benefit to be submissive to your own husbands [under the authority of

> your husbands] so that even if some of them do not obey the word [are carnal believers or unbelievers], they may be won over without a word by the manner of life [deportment] of their wives when they observe their behavior of respect (I Peter 3:1-2).

God commands every wife to be submissive to her husband, regardless of his worth as a human being. This submission is mental as well as physical. It is not intolerable slavery, but a glorious life of happiness for the woman who loves the Lord Jesus Christ above all else. Even for the Christian woman who knows she married the wrong man, submission is not burdensome when she follows her Lord's example of submission.

In other words, wives, if you are growing in grace through the daily study and application of Bible doctrine, your lifestyle will make a dent in your husband's carnality or unbelief. *Actions speak louder than words.* With words, you may win an argument with him, but you may also lengthen the time it takes him to become interested in salvation or the Word of God. No woman can win her husband to the Lord unless she uses divine principles, which give her freedom from anxiety, worry, fear, bitterness, self-pity, and all other mental attitude sins. Her self-composure, because of her confidence in God, will draw her spouse to her. He may never believe in Christ (we aren't promised that, although it may happen), but he will become more tolerant of her spiritual life as he sees it radiating from her.

The silence of virtue love is much more powerful than any words or actions! I had a dramatic experience with this when I was a young man. I was a very stubborn child and rebelled whenever my father spanked me. In my rebellion, I attacked our house by continually throwing stones, which made a huge racket on our metal roof. One day, I heard the gospel message of our Lord Jesus Christ in our village and responded to it by faith alone in Christ alone. When my father became aware of my spiritual conversion, he spanked me mercilessly for deserting the cult in which I had been baptized. After my father spanked me, I quietly sat down; there was no hurling of rocks or curses as I used to do. My father was shocked and amazed! Right there and then he became interested in whatever had brought about such a dramatic change in his son. He later believed in Christ and likewise his wife and other members of our family.

Virtue love is powerful. Beware of self-righteous arrogance! You should never pray that God would twist your spouse's free will so that he can fit into your bottle. Such prayers are never answered! Prayer is not designed to change another's volition.

One exception exists in the doctrine of submission. If your husband (or anyone else in authority) is leading you on a road contrary to what the Bible teaches, then you are not to yield to his demands to sin. For instance, if he asks you to commit an immoral act, such as viewing pornography, then you are not liable at that moment to the command to submit yourself to him. This does not mean that you are to rebuke, insult, or be disrespectful to him. The Bible declares,

> The mind of the righteous [a believer with integrity] ponders how to answer (Proverbs 15:28a).

> A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger (Proverbs 15:1).

Humility and submission to authority are not compatible with what I call the "battle of the mouths." Don't exchange harsh words with your husband. Don't nag him. Don't tell him he's wrong. Even if he is a believer and has failed the Lord, you don't want to fail the Lord, too. You will if you react with negative words. Don't allow a sinful emotion such as anger to overwhelm you and give control of your soul to the Old Sin Nature.

> He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit [temper] is better than he who takes a city (Proverbs 16:32).

When you are in a confusing situation, pause for a few seconds and allow the Holy Spirit to recall to your mind all doctrines suitable for the situation. If you pass the test of not allowing your anger, self-pity, bitterness, or arrogance to overtake you, God will take notice of your integrity.

In light of our exposition on submission, let us summarize a few principles:

- Submission to legitimate authority is honorable. Christ Jesus set the precedent for us to follow.
- Christ Jesus should always be our mirror as we endeavor to fulfill the Father's plan with regard to marriage.
- The submission of a wife to her husband is not optional but a divine command.
- A wife cannot truly submit to the leadership of her husband apart from acquiring the thinking of Christ, which is found only in the daily study of His Word
- A wife should monitor her spiritual life carefully, confessing any sin to God the moment she detects it. (So should a husband!) Only when she is in fellowship can she have the right mental attitude of joyful submission.

Chapter Five

Love in Marriage

Love isn't romantic nonsense or sexual compatibility. Romance and sex definitely do enhance love in marriage, but they aren't love. Love is a system of thinking in the soul. That's right — thinking! In order to have ultimate love for each other, a Christian husband and wife must love God even more than they love each other. They can only love God if they know Him. To know God is to love Him. To love God is to respect Him. To respect Him is to obey Him.

God has given two types of love to mankind, intensive and responding. A husband loves his wife with intensive love, also called enduring devotion, while a wife loves her husband with responding love, also called respect. His love is enduring and intensive. He sets her above all others and is dedicated to her welfare. She admires him, defers to his opinions, esteems him above all others, honors him in her thoughts as well as her actions, is considerate of his needs, and views him as the best of all men.

Intensive and responsive love are mirrored in the spiritual life. Husband and wife show intensive love toward God through taking in the Word and applying it. They show responsive love toward God by being obedient to His Word, starting with confession.

> He who conceals his sins [from God] cannot prosper [move forward in the spiritual life], but whoever confesses [his sin to God] and forsakes them [forgets them, feels no guilt] will find compassion (Proverbs 28:13).

Love is expressed toward others in two ways, through personal and virtue love. Normally, spouses get married because they feel personal love for each other. They love each other more than anyone in life. They desire to be together always, and so they marry. Such love is inherently weak because it derives its strength from the object of its love. For instance, if a man loves a woman only because of her curvaceous figure, when that figure disappears, as it inevitably will with age, his love will vanish as well. Or if a wife loves her husband

because of his pleasant disposition, when his Old Sin Nature manifests itself in anger or moodiness, her personal love for him will drastically change. This alteration of love because of a spouse's altered appearance or behavior explains why some people fall in love, marry, and then fall out of love. They loved each other with personal love only, which is too weak to sustain a marriage. Personal love can and does diminish and end.

> And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold [die] (Matthew 24:12).

Our personal love depends on the personality, looks, or intelligence of the one we love. Personal love is an intense expression of ego, of that which is attractive to us, that which pleases us, that which gives us personal enjoyment. Someone feeling personal love may say, "I love you," emphasizing that he is attracted to you because of something about you that turns him on. If you change or his perception of you changes, his love will end. It's that simple. Personal love is discriminating, as easily turned off as turned on. We love only a few people with personal love because only a few people meet our criteria for love. We love only one person with the personal love reserved for our spouse.

Our love must increase, or it will decrease. It cannot remain static. The only way we can increase our personal love is by adding virtue love to it. When we do, a stronger, more enduring personal love is always the outcome. With virtue love, we love each other with the same love Jesus Christ had for us on the Cross.

Virtue Love (Agape)

Personal and virtue love are both needed in marriage, but virtue love is the key to success in marriage and in the spiritual life as well. It is the superstructure upon which a marriage is built. Without a superstructure, a building crumbles.

> A new commandment I give to you: That you love one another even as I have loved you (John 13:34).

God understands that man will inevitably and invariably fail because of his Old Sin Nature and that his personal love, even for

God's intended spouse, is not strong enough to sustain a marriage by itself; therefore, God commands us to love each other with another type of love, virtue love,[8] translated from the Greek word *agape* as the highest form of love. God commands every Christian to have virtue love for everyone, in marriage and out. Personal love is optional, but virtue love is mandated.

So what is this virtue love that God commands us to have? How can we get it? For the purposes of this discussion, we'll call this love *virtue love* in order to reinforce that this greatest of all loves depends on the virtue of the one loving, not on the attributes of the one being loved. Most people don't have virtue love; road rage, drive-by shootings, rude behavior, the high volume of gossip-magazine sales, all make this obvious. Most people don't have virtue so most people don't have virtue love. Even most believers don't have virtue love! Virtue love is obtained through a thorough understanding of Bible truth, and most believers don't want to be bothered with learning God's Word.

To understand this unique love, we need to go to its source, God Himself. God has always loved us with virtue love. He always will. God loved us first in eternity past when He developed His plan for us, including His willingness to go to the Cross for us, sinners without worth. He loved us then, and His love has never changed. He will always love us with a perfect love, regardless of how good or bad we are. This is virtue love.

Though we are without worth or value on our own, we are able to love God through the staying power of the spiritual life as we consistently learn Bible truth. When we learn enough about God to begin loving Him, we are able to begin loving all people also. We have the power to love all mankind with God's virtue love since "we love because He first loved us" (I John 4:19).

You may have noticed that I keep saying that we are to love all mankind, everyone. No doubt someone comes into your mind, the man who cheated you out of a lot of money, or the woman who continues spreading vicious lies about you, or your boss who regularly promotes others of less worth rather than you. Yes, God expects you to love everyone, even them. Yes, even those who treat you unfairly or viciously or contemptuously, even those who

[8] Virtue love is also called agape love, unconditional love, and principled love.

blaspheme our Lord and Savior. As believers, we are to love everyone as God loves us: With virtue love. We are to love those enemies who have sworn vengeance against us with the same virtue love that we feel toward our spouse who is the dearest to our heart. We are to love lovely people as well as mean ones. We are to love even the most evil people, not with personal love — personal love would be impossible because they are evil, but with virtue love. We love them not because of who they are but because of who we are. God loves us; we love God; we love them.

Virtue love is consistent and always kind, whether confronted by antagonism or friendliness, hatred or love. Because of virtue love for all mankind, we are able to live our lives in soul strength and tranquility, regardless of how unfairly we are treated by others or how miserable our circumstances.

Virtue love is the expression of *our* integrity. With virtue love, we love everyone unconditionally, even the most loathsome, because of the integrity in *our* souls. We know they are loathsome, but we have a relaxed mental attitude about them anyway. Our virtue love has nothing to do with them, and everything to do with the doctrine in our soul. Our integrity always exceeds their loathsomeness. Because virtue love is motivated by our personal love for God and not by the worth of any person, that love endures because it is perpetuated by our integrity and honor, without reaction, retaliation for real wrongs, prejudice, or discrimination. Our virtue love can't be destroyed by anyone else's anger, hatred, antagonism, animosity, or hostility because it is based on Bible doctrine in our souls.

Virtue love sounds great, doesn't it? Also, sounds impossible. Virtue love would be impossible were it not for *God's* integrity. The righteousness of God demands that He provide the ability for us to fulfill everything He mandates of us. God knows our imperfections; therefore, He has designed a plan whereby He becomes the source of the power to accomplish that which He requires, in this case virtue love. In other words, we are helpless, but God has provided for our helplessness. God demands virtue love from us. The omnipotence of the filling of the Holy Spirit plus the omnipotence of the Word of God are our power to fulfill His divine demand. We can have virtue love only when we are filled with the Holy Spirit, when we have His power to do the seemingly impossible. We can't have virtue love when we sin and don't confess. However, because virtue love is a

Spirit-filled love, it is perfect, never decreasing or corrupting under any circumstances.

Virtue love is essential to a successful marriage and must be added to personal love before two believers consider marrying. Then, when a right man or woman says, "I love you," they are saying that they are attracted to each other because of personal love and that love will last. It is assuring you that even if your attractiveness fades with time or fluctuates with moods, love will remain constant and even grow because it is based on the integrity in the soul, which will increase with spiritual growth. He will continue loving you "until death do us part" because this love comes from the unshakable foundation of virtue. Virtue love will disregard any malice or hostility on your part and substitute the virtues of tolerance, courtesy, humility, and objectivity. Flattery, praise, and attention will not be necessary for the continuance of love.

Let's go a step further in our understanding of the importance of virtue love in marriage. Personal love manufactures problems because personal love is ego-driven and without tolerance, kindness, or forgiveness. Virtue love, however, by its very nature, solves those problems; therefore, virtue love is the one essential ingredient in a successful marriage. Lack of virtue love in marriage causes wives to weep and wail, and husbands to gnash their teeth. Personal love has a natural tendency to run away or lash out when faced with flaws in the one they love. Virtue love stays and brings joy and inner peace.
I want to be sure you understand, everyone has flaws, even you; therefore, marital problems are inevitable. Disaster isn't inevitable, however, because virtue love provides stability through the utilization of biblical principles to overcome all problems as they arise. Virtue love also provides the staying power to tolerate your spouse even at his worst. Your virtue added to personal love will provide both stability and stamina to your marriage even under the most trying circumstances.

Through our knowledge of the Bible, we are aware at least in a small measure of God's immeasurable grace toward us. Our application of grace toward others, especially through virtue love, should intensify as we recognize that we are the major recipients of grace — grace from God and from our spouse when we fail.

Because a woman is a responder, in marriage she responds to her husband's personal love for her with personal love for him. She

basks in the warmth of his love, radiating it back to him in loving attention and kindness. The opposite is equally true. She will not have personal love for him if he has no virtue love for all mankind and no personal love for her. Similarly, if she has no virtue love for others, she can't possibly love her husband. Virtue love is non-selective. Thus, if a believer has mental attitude sins toward anyone, he can't have virtue love for his spouse. Genuine love can only come from a combination of personal love and virtue love.

God neatly summarizes virtue love so that we can have no doubts of His will for us.

> Virtue love [virtue love for all mankind and personal love for God the Father] is forbearing [steadfast, patient, self-controlled, free from emotional reaction and annoyance] and kind [loving and merciful]. Virtue love is not jealous and is not insolent [does not brag]. Virtue love is not inflated with arrogance. Virtue love does not behave dishonorably [rudely, without principle], is not self-seeking or self-promoting [not preoccupied with self], does not become irritated [bitter, angry, hypersensitive], does not react to [or think] evil [doesn't retaliate or hate; doesn't remember wrongs done to it]. Virtue love does not rejoice over injustice, but joyfully sides with the truth [Bible doctrine]. Virtue love bears all things [even as Jesus Christ bore up under the worst of all conditions], keeps all things confidential [throws a cloak of silence over everything], always believes all things, always has confident expectations in the Lord, always perseveres. Love [the virtue love of the mature believer for God and his spouse, which is the manifestation of the filling of the Spirit] never fails [becomes invalid] (I Corinthians 13:4-8b).

The believer with virtue love believes all things and hopes all things for those whom he loves, believing and hoping that they will reach the highest and best of the spiritual life. He has confidence in God for them.

A Husband's Love

God commands every believer to love everyone with virtue love, but He reinforces that command in the case of husbands.

God specifically commands husbands to *love* their wives, not with personal love, that is assumed to be true or they wouldn't have married them, but with virtue love, the love of virtue.

> Husbands, love [*agapao*] your wives just as Christ loved the Church and delivered Himself over in a sacrificial way as a substitute for her (Ephesians 5:25).

This commandment, one of the loftiest given by God, is given to every man who desires to have a wife. A husband can reach this love, *agape* love, only through the spiritual status of occupation with Christ.[9] Such a husband has the quintessential love possible for his wife because he imitates Jesus Christ in both virtue love and personal love. He willingly takes assaults from the world and Satan because he stands in front of his wife and protects her. (God adds further inducements to the husband who doesn't wake up to his need to protect her: Divine discipline!)

Ephesians 5:25 begins with a direct command from God to every believer husband, and that command is non-negotiable. He *must* love his wife with virtue love. Either he is fulfilling this supreme command by loving his wife with *agape* love, or he is rebelling against God.

Thanks be to God for the preservation of the original text of this verse in the Greek, otherwise Bible experts would be cutting each other's throats in their attempts to explain it! God deliberately chose the word *agapao* to be used for love. The exact meaning of this word "indicates a direction of the will and finding one's joy in anything. *Agapao* is used of God's love toward man. It is used of the love toward our enemies . . . it [*agapao*] stands higher above *phileo* [personal love] because of its moral import — love that expresses compassion."[10] We could accurately interpret the above verse in light of the Greek meaning of love in this way:

> Husbands, love your wives always, whether they are obnoxious or sweet, rude or pleasant, lovable or unlovable, worthy or unworthy, just as Christ also loved the Church

[9] Occupation with Christ is maximum personal love for the Lord attained from the daily Bible study by means of the filling of the Holy Spirit and motiviated by personal love for God the Father. The mature Christian makes Jesus Christ his role model and views life through His perfect perspective.

[10] Zodhiates, Spiros. *Hebrew Greek Key Study Bible,* Chattanooga, Tennessee; AMG Publishing. 1995.

and gave His life as a Substitute for her while her members were in their depraved state of inherent and personal sin.

The success of Christian marriage hangs on a thread of ultimate love, this virtue love, which God commands husbands to have for their wives. However, because all of us are obnoxious at times, personal love alone cannot hold a marriage together. Without the virtue love of Christ, the thread of personal love that joins a husband and wife will be snapped.

Today, too many Christians are holding on to their marriages even though the personal love that originally brought them together is gone. Some are holding on because of their children or because they would be labeled failures if they divorced. They are truly in a hell on earth, enduring instead of enjoying their marriages. The solution to their marital problems always has been and continues to be virtue love. With virtue love, personal love can be revived and nurtured into a gloriously fulfilling marriage.

When God performed the first marriage in the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve were bound together with personal love alone. They didn't need virtue love because they had no Old Sin Natures. That's why didn't God ask Adam to love his wife with the ultimate love of *agape*. Since Adam had no Old Sin Nature, his love would not change. However, when Adam sinned and sin entered the human race, everything changed. Since that time, mankind has needed virtue love, the stable love of Christ.

> O righteous Father! Although the world has not known You, I [Jesus Christ] have known You, and these have known that You sent Me. I have made Your integrity known [to the Church Age], and I will make it known [eternally] so that the love wherein You loved Me may be in them as I am in them (John 17:25-26).

". . . As Christ Loved the Church & Gave His Life as a Substitute for Her"

In order to comprehend and appreciate the meaning of this phrase from Ephesians 5:25, we need to understand that when our Lord Jesus Christ hung on the Cross, He was punished and died as a

Substitute for all sinners, for everyone, believer and unbeliever alike. At the time God the Father judged Him on the Cross, Jesus Christ was suffering for a mankind which had nothing — I mean nothing! — to offer Him. We still have nothing. No matter how good we may seem to ourselves or others, our human righteousness is unspeakably filthy and completely unacceptable to God.

> For all of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds [relatively righteous deeds: human good] are like a filthy garment [menstrual rag] (Isaiah 64:6).

What could you have offered Christ in order to make Him die as a substitute for you besides the filthy rags of your puny good deeds? Nothing. Are you lovable enough for Him to sacrifice everything for you? No. Are you worthy of that sacrifice? No. No. No. The obvious truth is that none of us can do anything to deserve His taking our place on the Cross!

> Though He [Jesus Christ] was rich yet for our sakes He became poor, so that we by means of His poverty might become rich (II Corinthians 8:9b).

> For God [the Father] made Him [Jesus Christ] who had no sin to become sin as a substitute for us for the purpose that through Him we [Church Age believers] might become once and for all the righteousness which belongs to God (II Corinthians 5:21).

Keep in mind that Jesus Christ is God and Man in one Person forever. When He came into the world, He came not as a Super man or Super angel but as a flesh and blood man just like us with the exception that He had no Old Sin Nature.

> Since the children have flesh and blood, He, too, shared in their humanity (Hebrews 2:14a).
> The Word [Jesus Christ] became flesh [humanity] and made His dwelling among us (John 1:14a).

For Christ to qualify as a perfect substitute for sinful man, He had to be true humanity in every sense of the word. In fact, He was called the last Adam (I Corinthians 15:45) because, like Adam, He was without the Old Sin Nature.

Like us, He needed to learn the Scriptures just as you and I are doing today. In describing His perception and application of them, Luke wrote,

> And the child [the humanity of Christ] continued to grow, increasing in wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him (Luke 2:40).

Luke was telling us that Jesus Christ did not come into this world fully armed with knowledge and wisdom. He had to learn the Scriptures line upon line, precept upon precept. He spent much time in the Temple, listening to teachers and studying the Scriptures. (Luke 2:46-49) Because He studied the Scriptures consistently, He advanced rapidly to spiritual maturity. His submission to His Father's will guided Him. His personal love for His Father motivated Him. He held tight to His need to grow in the Word. As a result,

> He kept increasing in wisdom and stature, and in favor with [first] God and [secondly with] men (Luke 2:52).

The word wisdom used in Luke 2:40 and again in Luke 2:52 is the Greek word *sophia,* meaning the knowledge necessary for a relationship with God, wisdom which is related to goodness. This knowledge, which Christ pursued relentlessly while on earth, is the same knowledge available to us in the Bible. We have His very thinking in writing, waiting to be revealed to us if we so desire.

The relationship between Christ on the Cross and sinful mankind is the exact relationship God desires to exist between a husband and his wife. In other words, God wants a husband's love for his wife not to depend on who and what she is, but on his own integrity. That means that he is to love his wife at every moment, even when she fails miserably.

> We have come to know what [virtue] love is from the fact that He lay down His life for us (I John 3:16).

A husband can attain this level of love only through saturating his soul with Bible teaching. His daily intake of Bible doctrine is similar to the experience of many gold miners. Armed with only sketchy knowledge of the location of the gold and a few basic tools, a miner begins a tedious but potentially rewarding adventure. He

may dig five feet and find nothing except that his tools work. He may dig another twenty feet, but still find no gold, just evidence that the potential exists. But finally, after days and weeks and months, even years of sweat and toil, he locates a lode. He is rightly overwhelmed with the joy of success and the realization that he has before him an abundance of wealth.

Similarly, a believer may begin with nothing more than the knowledge that spirituality depends on his naming his sins to God whenever he fails (I John 1:9). From this beginning, God the Holy Spirit fills him and gives him the spiritual IQ necessary to comprehend and absorb the Word of God. His spiritual progress may not seem fruitful. Sometimes he may think that he is wasting his time learning, attending church and Bible study. He may even allege that applying truth doesn't work for him. But if he is persistent in his learning, he will begin to understand doctrinal principles and be able to apply them to his circumstances. He will reach the point in his spiritual life where he can echo the apostle Paul, who said,

> For to me [a believer who has advanced to spiritual maturity], to live is Christ, and to die [physical death] is profit [eternal rewards and blessings] (Philippians 1:21).

When a husband reaches the level where nothing, and I mean nothing, matters more than continuous fellowship with the invisible but real God and fulfillment of His plan, he will wholeheartedly concentrate on the glorification of God.

> Husbands, love your wives just as Christ also loved the Church and gave Himself up as a substitute for her (Ephesians 5:25a).

Because a husband is to love his wife as Christ loved the Church, he must have the thinking of Christ. He must store Bible truth in his soul just as Christ did. A husband who fails to love his wife with virtue love fails to follow in the footsteps of our Lord Jesus Christ.

> Having purified your souls by means of obedience to the faith [execution of the spiritual life] by [virtue] love for the brethren, love one another with a flexible and durable love (I Peter 1:22).

When a marriage is in limbo, the only question a husband and wife should ask themselves is, "Are we growing spiritually?" The popular saying that "couples who pray together stay together" has a bit of truth to it. But the whole truth is that couples who consistently learn God's Word together and who faithfully apply this truth to their lives stay together and prosper together!

A Challenge to Husbands

As God, Christ did not need anyone to teach Him, for God is omniscient. (John 1:46-50) As God, He did not need to acquire the love of God, for in His deity He is love (I John 4:8); but as Man, Jesus Christ had to learn the Word of God in order to acquire the very same love that belonged to His deity, the only love needed for Him to fulfill the Father's plan, *agape* love, virtue love for all mankind. Christ's virtue love kept Him from reacting to the countless abuses of those whom He came to save. While He was on the Cross, this virtue love caused Him to pray for those who mocked and crucified Him:

> Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing (Luke 23:34).

The magnitude of Christ's love poses a challenge to every husband. If you want to love your wife as God commands, if you want to love her as Christ loved the Church and gave Himself as a sacrifice for her, then you must emulate our Lord Jesus Christ.

> When He was abused, He didn't return abuse. When He suffered [as He did throughout His time on earth], He didn't threaten, but He entrusted Himself to the One who judges righteously (I Peter 2:23).

To meet this challenge, you must love everyone, above all your wife, as Christ loves them, with virtue love. You must willingly return good for evil.

This brings us to these vital principles:

- God has given the husband the responsibility for the success of his marriage; therefore, husbands, if your marriage fails, it is because you, not your wife, failed. Don't point your finger at your wife or at anyone else. Instead, look at your own thoughts and actions to discover the reason for your marital disaster.

- A husband's relationship and rapport with God must precede his relationship and rapport with his wife. If his relationship with God is weak, his relationship with his wife will also be weak, even chaotic.
- For his marriage to thrive, a husband's continued fellowship with God must take precedence over everything in his life.
- A husband must never lose touch with Bible truth and its application. He can acquire the same wisdom which Christ acquired through His study of Scripture. By this he maintains his rapport with God and his wife allowing him to live with her in happiness.
- In order for a husband to handle his Old Sin Nature, he must confess (realistic self-judgment) and consistently grow in grace through the study of Scripture. In order for a husband to truly love his wife when her Old Sin Nature rears its ugly head, he must attain the ultimate love that Christ attained in His humanity, *agape* love, virtue love.
- When a husband follows the above principles on a daily basis, he has the privilege of celebrating the resultant joy in his marriage on a daily basis!

Chapter Six

God's Plan for the Husband

Parents are the single greatest influence on children. God provided the male with parents in order that they might prepare him for the greatest responsibility in his life: leader of his wife as together they advance to a corporate testimony in marriage. A male needs his parents for a time: childhood; and during that time, they are to prepare him to leave them. They are to teach him to honor all women and to eventually exercise loving companionship with one woman. They are to teach him humility and thereby give him the proper foundation for the authority he will have as an adult. A boy who respects his mother also loves womanhood.

The male soul is aggressive and requires a great deal of discipline (external authority) in order to develop self-discipline (internal authority). A boy who submits to the authority of his parents learns to have authority over his own actions and thoughts. In that way, he comes to understand the proper way to exercise authority over others, including his future wife. He learns not to make decisions based on emotion, personal preference, or expediency but rather on the basis of virtue.

During these growth years, a father plays a crucial role in the development of true masculinity in his son. Masculinity is at its essence the combining of authority with virtue. A father who has problems with or hostility toward authority is incapable of exerting authority based on virtue over his wife and children. Through his bad example, he may pass his own problems with authority to his son, frequently in the form of abusive behavior. A father who is passive in his marriage and unwilling to accept his leadership role causes equal problems for his children. Children from mother-dominant homes are more likely to develop sexual-identity problems and difficulty in interpersonal relationships than those from homes in which the father takes his rightful role as leader and ultimate authority.

Fathers who are truly masculine, who interact with their sons and show affection toward them, will have sons who have these traits as well. Thus, a boy's masculinity is a function, in part, of the frequency

and intensity of his contact with a father figure. Fathers don't have to be absent to fail to develop masculinity in their sons, just too wrapped up in their work or hobbies, or too tired or uninterested to care.

Every boy should be trained to be productive and hardworking. The provider role is the male's God-given responsibility, which attaches him to his marital home and makes him the bread-winner. Mothers first and then fathers are responsible for training their sons to be productive and energetic in their work. Boys should be gradually eased into leadership roles by observing their fathers undertaking the role of a man in a noble, loving, responsible manner.

The strong sexual drive of boys should be recognized and channeled, not ignored. A father has the responsibility of teaching his son that girls are not objects by which they satisfy their own lusts. Lust is the temptation factor of the Old Sin Nature. Love is never lust. Lust is never love.

While fathers instill masculine traits such as self-confidence, assertiveness, and initiative in their sons, mothers provide the core of warmth from which a sense of self can emerge. A mother's love and attention make a boy feel secure and comfortable, but a father's love and attention equip him to face the world. A mother's love for and acceptance of her son, her fond interaction with him, cause him to respond positively to his father's discipline. A mother teaches her son to be tender, compassionate, thoughtful, and sensitive. She instills in him norms and standards, everything from proper manners to proper morals.

There comes a time when a man (not a boy) should turn away from parental authority and take a wife. His right woman needs him more than his parents do.

His Wife: The Weaker Vessel

During the wedding ceremony, the man promises before God and man to love, cherish, honor, and protect his wife, forsaking all others, in sickness as well as in health, in adversity as well as in prosperity, for better or for worse, and to cleave only to her as long as they both shall live. Husbands, can your wife testify to your faithfulness in keeping this vow, day after day, month after month, year after year, first as unto the Lord and then as unto her?

> Married men, likewise live together with your wives in an intelligent consideration of them [based on Bible doctrine], showing them deference as the weaker vessels [receivers and responders], as those who with you are co-inheritors of the grace of life [the spiritual life and eternal life]. . . (I Peter 3:7a).

The woman is like a vessel, she must receive something, must be initiated to. A husband fills his right woman in two ways, first by depositing the principles and policies of his life into her soul and second by depositing his sexual vigor into her body. He must take care of his wife in all ways, spending as much time with her as is possible. He should use this time in part to communicate his policies to her. Lack of communication builds frustration in both husband and wife.

A wife will reflect what a husband deposits in her soul. Remember the old saying "Garbage in, garbage out?" it applies here too. Husbands, consider carefully the effect of your thoughts, words, and actions on the vessel that is your wife.

Note that husband and wife are "co-inheritors of the grace of life." Again, God reminds us that an *intimate* connection exists between the spiritual life and marriage.

The Goals of the Husband

Knowledge of the Bible and the filling of the Holy Spirit are the only divine provisions available to you, husbands, to fulfill your role in marriage. They are also the only ones you need. If you bypass these grace provisions, you will have a rugged road in your marriage. If you hold to them tenaciously and allow them to work for you, your marriage will reap immeasurable benefits.

A reservoir of Bible doctrine in your soul is necessary for you to have an understanding of women in general, of the power of the Old Sin Nature to damage and even destroy your marriage, and of the Biblical principles that safeguard marriage. With a good understanding of the problems as well as the divine solutions to any problems, you can infuse success into your marriage.

Through the consistent Bible study and application of this truth, every husband has the power to become:

1. *A man of wisdom.* Wisdom is the correct application of biblical truth in one's soul. One can have knowledge and not have

wisdom. Solomon had knowledge but did not have wisdom so he asked God for wisdom. James asks Christians to do likewise:

> But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him keep on asking of God, who gives to all men generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him (James 1:5).

It is interesting to see the usage of the English word *ask,* which is translated from the Greek word *aiteo.* This word has several meanings, but the emphasis in this verse indicates that an inferior is asking something of a superior. "It means ask, request, beg, to beg for alms (Luke 16:3). The seeking by the inferior from the superior (Acts 12:20); by a beggar from the giver (Acts 3:2); by the child from the parents (Matthew 7:9); by man from God (Matthew 7:7)."[11]

2. *A man of integrity.* The integrity of the believing husband is also formed through the daily perception and application of Bible doctrine. He lives a lifestyle of truthfulness and honesty, of humility and grace, of hard work and compassion toward all mankind. His lifestyle is then emulated by his wife.

> The integrity of the upright guides them, but the unfaithful are destroyed by their duplicity [trickery or dishonesty] (Proverbs 11:3).

3. *A man of sensitivity.* As the initiator, a husband sends his wife one of two signals, positive or negative. If he sends positive signals in the form of good leadership and love, she will undoubtedly respond to him with respect and admiration. On the other hand, if he fails his wife through poor leadership, neglect, or abuse, she may react to him, becoming bitter, hostile, or depressed. A wife is designed by God to respond to her husband, whether for the bad or the good. A husband of integrity is continually thoughtful of his wife. In every decision, he considers first his wife's best interests. He knows his wife's soul; therefore, he does that which he knows is best for her. He reminds himself constantly that God expects fairness from him and holds him totally responsible for any unfair actions.

[11] Ibid.

Masters, provide your slaves [anyone under your authority] with what is right and fair because you know that you also have a Master in Heaven (Colossians 4:1).

He is consumed by his wife's needs, considering her needs far above his own. Because he is dedicated to her interests, she responds with consideration and partiality for him. She gives back to him in the same measure that he has given to her, bringing great happiness to them both.

4. *A man of humility.* He understands that God is the One who has given him authority over his wife, that he is no better than she, and that everything he has is because of the grace of God. He is humbled by God's trust in him and determined to fulfill that trust through perseverance in his study of God's Word. Further, he is humbled by his wife's trust in him as head of the family and determined to lead her with integrity.

His Role in Marriage

The husband's role in marriage includes the following:

1. *That of leader and not tyrant.* Tyrants dictate while leadership leads. Tyrants thrive on arrogance while leadership esteems humility. A husband must lead and never dictate. He may have no authority anywhere except in his marriage, but if he accepts his responsibility as husband and is a true leader, he will glorify God to the maximum. Virtue love (*agape*) is the backbone of that leadership.

   When a husband acquires this ultimate love, he treats his wife with patience and kindness. Virtue love propels him to be thoughtful of her in everything. He is ever ready to treat her in grace, recognizing that he can never show her enough grace in light of the amazing grace God unceasingly showers on him. He was lost, and God found him; he was blind, and God gave him sight; he was spiritually dead, and God raised him up and gave him life eternal. He treats her lovingly regardless of her treatment of him. He never indulges in self-pity.

   Husbands, love your wives, and stop being bitter against them (Colossians 3:19).

When his wife fails, he does not magnify her failures. He treats her with grace, both forgiving and forgetting. He never says, "Honey, I told you so." Rather, he fulfills God's expectations of him.

> Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep (Romans 12:15).

He is not jealous when his wife succeeds more than he does. He never competes with her in any sense of the word. He gives her room to grow spiritually, recognizing that spiritual growth is a gradual process and that his own growth is far from complete.

He lives his spiritual life in such a way that it attracts his wife toward him and thus elicits great respect and submission from her. His leadership ability and his respect for his wife enlarge as he makes himself available to learning Bible doctrine. Thus, through the perception and application of Bible doctrine on a consistent basis, he uses his God-given authority in marriage in a manner that glorifies God in the devil's world.

2. That of a producer of happiness. Because God gives a husband total authority over his wife, God holds him responsible for making her happy.

> When a man takes a new wife, he shall not go out with the army, nor be charged with any duty; he shall be free at home one year and shall give happiness to his wife whom he has taken (Deuteronomy 24:5).

During the time that Israel was God's priest nation, He gave every newly married man a vacation from the military so that he could make his wife happy! That first year of doing nothing but making love and bringing happiness to his wife formed the basis of the right man/right woman relationship for the rest of their lives. God expects every husband to dedicate part of his time to increasing his wife's happiness.

I'm not talking about chasing her around the house or writing her love notes or buying her dozens of roses. All of these are great! But a wife's happiness hangs on her husband's attitude toward her. You can buy a gross of roses every evening for your wife, but if you treat her like an inferior, if you have little respect for her, if

you ignore her, if you abuse her in any way, those 144 roses are meaningless. Instead, so fill your soul with virtue love that your every word and action proclaim your enduring love for her.

3. *That of an architect.* With his wife at his side, a husband draws up a plan on which to build his family. He constantly monitors and adjusts his plan according to current circumstances. This plan considers all aspects of the marriage: financial, social, vocational, and spiritual. It includes the right time to bring children into the family and the number of children to have.

   Ultimately, God makes these decisions, giving life at its proper time, but the husband makes them from a human perspective. As a friend enjoys saying, "We plan, and God laughs." A note for consideration: God doesn't command us to have children; neither is there a clear-cut commandment in the Bible regarding the number of children to have; therefore, spiritual commonsense should prevail.

   Children aren't necessary for a marriage to be a success. Success in marriage is measured purely on the yardstick of a corporate testimony.

4. *That of a financial overseer.* A husband, with his wife at his side, takes the lead in how financial matters should be handled. The apostle Paul wrote,

   > But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those in his household, he has denied the faith [failed in application of Bible doctrine] and is worse than an unbeliever (I Timothy 5:8).

   Even in giving an offering to the Lord or in helping others, the Word of God always emphasizes the balance between providing for family and offering to God.

   > Our desire is not that others might be relieved while you are hard pressed, but that there might be equality [balance] (II Corinthians 8:13).

   A husband should know that if he marries before he is financially capable of supporting his wife or if he brings more children into the world than he can handle financially, he will suffer the consequences. God holds him alone responsible for the care of

his wife and children. Not his wife. Not the government. Not the church. He alone is responsible for their care.

5. *That of teacher of his wife.* A husband has the responsibility of helping his wife to understand Bible truth. He doesn't take the place of a pastor-teacher, but he leads her into wise decisions based on divine viewpoint. A wife should be humble in her teachability.

   Let a woman quietly receive instruction with entire submission [self-control] (I Timothy 2:11).

6. *That of disciplinarian of the children.* Discipline is loving leadership; therefore, the husband should be the main source of discipline for his children. All children need structure and restraint because all children are born sinners. Under conditions of reasonable and measured discipline, they become self-restrained, having a modest self-esteem coupled with a desire for excellence. Through discipline, a father trains his children to control the temptations of their Old Sin Nature and to overcome self-absorption.

   Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child. The rod of correction will drive it far from him (Proverbs 22:15).

   He who spares his rod hates his son, but he who loves him disciplines him promptly (Proverbs 13:24).

   A father who loves his children disciplines them just as God, his Father, disciplines him when he fails.

The Glory of the Man

When a husband fulfills God's plan for him in marriage, when he loves his wife as Christ loved the Church, then he recognizes his wife as his glory. She is the crown that God gives him as the greatest blessing he can have on earth.

The woman is the glory (Greek: *doxa*) of the man (I Corinthians 11:7b).

The Greek word *doxa,* translated in English as glory, denotes "that appearance which catches the eye or attracts attention, commanding

recognition . . . splendor [and] brilliance."[12] In light of this definition, four important principles are apparent:

1. God in His infinite wisdom created woman to be a glory, a radiance to be beheld by one man only. A believing husband should be extremely careful about his dealings with other women. God designed only one woman for him to behold, namely his wife.
2. Every man has his own uniquely designed woman, one made to exactly complement him.
3. Therefore, before any man chooses a woman to marry, he must make sure that she is the constant object of his attraction above and beyond all others.
4. A virtuous woman brings honor to her husband.

His Physical Strength

God formed the body of the first man, Adam, to have an advantage over the woman in physical strength. We might ask why God gave man extraordinary strength in the original creation since it wasn't needed in the perfect environment of the Garden of Eden. God's omniscience, His complete knowledge of everything, is the reason. In eternity past, God knew that man would fail after creation and that the entrance of sin into the world would necessitate certain grace provisions for mankind, including superior strength for the male. Concerning the omniscience of God, King David wrote,

> Your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in Your book *before one of them came to be* (Psalm 139:16-17).

God knew in eternity past, long before Adam sinned, exactly what the judgment and sentencing for his sin of disobedience would be; therefore, God endowed him with physical strength from the very beginning. God sentenced Adam in the following manner:

> "Cursed is the ground because of you. Through painful toil, you will eat of it all the days of your life. It will produce thorns [hardship] and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the

[12] Ibid.

field. By the sweat of your brow, you will eat your food until you return to the ground since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return" (Genesis 3:17-19).

Tearing and tilling the ground in order to plant crops for food is not a piece of cake. I have worked on my father's farm, and I can unequivocally tell you that it is not even a crumb from the cake! It is backbreaking work.

Since Adam's sin and sentence, man has not ceased being preoccupied with providing food for himself and his family. Part of the judgment against him is that he must continue working until he dies. In part, this explains why even wealthy men never seem satisfied with what they have. The urge to continue working is in man until death. However, a man who spends too much time on his work has a wrong scale of values. Remember what happened when Adam neglected Eve!

In order to understand man's physical strength over woman, one of the Hebrew words for *man* is worthy of examination. *Geber* or *gibbor,* which occurs many times in the Old Testament, means "man, valiant man, male person, boy, husband, warrior . . . It has the flavor of prevailing in a virile [strong] manner and being arrogant about it. (Isaiah 42:13) It was commonly associated with warfare and had to do with the strength and vitality of a successful warrior. A *geber* was a male at the very peak of his natural strength."[13] God said to Job, "Gird up your loins like a man [*geber*]" (Job 40:7 emphasis added).

In today's language, this idiomatic expression could be translated: "Job, I have heard your whining. Quit it and behave like a man!" God expects a man to behave with strength and integrity. The strongest man is one with virtue love in his soul. He is able to be satisfied through his relationship with the Lord, rather than through outside stimulation. He uses his authority with virtue and couples it with a sense of responsibility toward his wife and his family.

Before we go any further, we need to make one additional principle clear. While a woman's body is weaker, her soul is not. She has the same potential as her husband to execute the spiritual life. Both have equal privilege and opportunity to learn the Word of God

[13] Ibid.

and to grow in grace and thus glorify God equally in their lives and their marriage.

Now, let's examine in detail the three main reasons God gave man extra strength.

1. *For the provision of his wife and family:* In order to bring the truth out from the Scripture, the time of its writing must always be considered. In other words, the Bible must be interpreted in the time in which it was written. In the past, women were not supposed to go to the bush and hunt animals for food. This was the man's sentence from God after his sin in the Garden of Eden. So, wife, the next time you see your husband splitting hard wood with an ax or sweating in his quest to provide for the family, remind yourself that the word of God never goes void. The sentence of man's ordeal was rendered thousands of years ago, but the effect continues until now — just as God promised. Remind yourself also that the long hours your husband spends behind a computer or the steering wheel of a truck or a store counter are all the consequence of Adam's fall and the male's responsibility to provide for his family with the sweat of his brow.

   A man will always have the urge to provide for his family. If he does not have this urge, as far as the Word of God is concerned, he has an abnormal mentality. When he is not in the position to do so because he is handicapped or has made wrong choices in his life, he inevitably continues to battle with the inadequacy of not being in the position to provide. Only God's Word can give him contentment.

   What about *women* who work outside of the home? Women who work outside the home are not committing a sin by doing so; however, no wife should ever operate on her own initiative. If her husband doesn't want her to work, she shouldn't. She should follow our Lord's example in His relationship with God the Father (John 5:30) by submitting to the leadership of her husband as they both strive to glorify God in their marriage.
2. *For the protection of his wife and family:* God in His infinite wisdom knew that man would not only be the head of the family but also its defender.

   When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own house, his possessions are safe (Luke 11:21).

When a wife hears a noise in the middle of the night, does she go herself to discover the source of the noise, or does she wake her husband? I would say that 99% of the time, a wife wakes her husband. That is as it should be. God designed her husband to protect her from any and all attacks, visible or invisible.

3. *For service in the military in the protection of the freedom of his wife, his family, and his country*: The same principle that our Lord Jesus Christ stated with regard to a strong man defending his house (Luke 11:21) also applies to defending his nation. War is ugly, brutal, and tedious; therefore, God has given the male extra physical strength to use in combat. In the entire biblical history of Israel, covering many thousands of years, women are not shown participating in combat one single time. On the contrary, women took care of the house and children while men fought in their defense.

   What about those women already in the military today? Should they resign? That is beyond the scope of this doctrinal exposition. We are not dealing with the military as such; we are just stating the biblical principle that excludes women from combat positions in the military.

The differences in the anatomies of male and female are the handiwork of God and part of His design and eternal purpose. God in His omniscience gave the wife this disadvantage in strength. He created this inequality. God designed her body to be more fragile but more attractive than the male's. She is the glory of her man, and his true strength comes from his motivation to do the will of his Lord in all things, especially his marriage, because it is the source of the greatest witness in the angelic conflict, the corporate testimony.

Chapter Seven

God's Plan for the Wife

It is interesting to note that regenerate women during the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ occupied a prominent place in His thinking. The gospel of Luke is full of evidence of Jesus' understanding of and sympathy for women, godly women such as Mary Magdalene, Martha, and Mary of Bethany, thereby setting a pattern for normal Christian living. Jesus's teachings stressed women, including the obligation of purity toward women (Matthew 5:27-32). His examples in healing (Matthew 9:18-26) and in social intercourse (Luke 10:38-42) stressed women. Women remained at the crucifixion until the burial, and women were the first to visit the empty tomb.

Women continued to play an important role in the early church, though not as deacons, evangelists, prophets, apostles, or pastor-teachers. Pastor-teacher, evangelist, and deacon continue to be spiritual gifts for men only.[14] In Jerusalem during the early church, the disciples met in the house of Mary, mother of John Mark. (Acts 12:12) Women accompanied the disciples on missionary journeys and provided for them out of their own means. (Luke 8:3) Women were among the first converts to Christianity, including the prosperous businesswoman, Lydia of Philippi, who was the first Christian convert in Europe (Acts 16:13-15). Women who have immersed themselves in God's Word and become God-centered continue to be beyond price to God.

Under the Leadership of Her Husband

God has a plan for the life of every woman, and the policy of that plan is called grace.

> From the fullness of His grace, we have all received one blessing after another (John 1:16).

[14] No prophets or apostles have existed since the canon of Scripture was completed in 96 AD.

The quiet soul of a woman is held precious in the eyes of God, the soul of a responder waiting for the initiation of leadership. God designed a woman's *soul* to respond to *one* man, her husband, and never to be an aggressor to any man. When a right woman knows her right man, she loves him. When she loves him, she respects him. When she respects him, she accepts his authority. When she accepts his authority, she obeys him.

Jesus Christ should be a role model for a wife. Although Jesus is co-equal with the Father He willingly and humbly submitted to the Father's plan. Concerning the Father's plan He said,

> My food is to do the will of Him [God the Father] who sent me and to accomplish His work (John 4:34).

This unique harmony between the Father and the Son provides a pattern for husband and his wife if they are to enjoy their marriage to the maximum. Just as Jesus Christ showed humility in fulfilling the Father's plan, so the wife must duplicate this marvelous humility in responding to the leadership of her husband. A wife is her husband's right hand lady, and nothing is demeaning in serving in that capacity or under any legitimate authority. Humility, which she acquires by means of learning and applying Bible truth, propels her to consistently and successfully fulfill her role in marriage. There are no two ways about it — either the wife responds to her husband's leadership in humility or she reacts against it in arrogance. Arrogance always brings down punishment from the Courtroom of Heaven. Humility brings success in all aspects of her life, including her marriage.

The head of the wife is the husband. The head of the Church is Christ. The head of Christ is God.

> But I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of the woman, and God is the head of Christ (I Corinthians 11:3).

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

What does it mean to be the head? The Greek word *kephale,* which is used in these verses, has several meanings: The human head as in anatomy (Matthew 6:17), head as in the top (Matthew 21:42),

and head as superior (Ephesians 5:23). Superior is the meaning in these verses about marriage. The husband is superior to his wife in that God has given him authority over her.

We have demonstrated that God the Son is equal to the Father and that though God the Father is designated as the head of Christ, in no way is God the Father superior to God the Son in His deity; therefore, designating a husband as the head of the wife should not bring the idea of inferiority into their relationship. If the roles of husband and wife are reversed, if she becomes the leader and he becomes the responder, little happiness is possible for either of them because they have chosen to ignore God's perfect plan for them.

When the Lord Jesus Christ reflected the policy of God the Father, He was called "the glory of the Father" (John 1:14). When a man reflects the policy of Christ, he is called "the glory of Christ" (I Corinthians 11:3, 7). When a woman reflects the policy of her husband, she is called "the glory of man" (I Corinthians 11:7). She is the glory of her husband when she reflects his thinking in her conversation and his dominion over her in her actions. She is the only creature in the world made in God's image yet custom made for one man.

It takes a humble, godly woman to follow God's plan for her role in the family. However, if any husband tries to establish a policy that is a violation of the Word of God, his wife has the freedom to reject it and still remain in fellowship. She must do so without thinking less of her husband. Such an attitude of humility is only possible if she has virtue love in her soul.

Every spiritually mature wife who lives with a carnal husband must enter into her reservoir of Bible knowledge pertinent to the situation, and through the enabling power of the Holy Spirit apply them to the glory of God. If she allows her husband's behavior to upset her, she is out of fellowship. Only a wife with great integrity doesn't allow her spiritual lifestyle to be controlled by her husband's failures and continues to respectfully subordinate herself to him.

The Goals of the Wife

A wife who desires to fulfill her part in marriage should

1. *Give the learning and application of divine principles the highest priority in her life.* Through the perception and application of Bible truth comes the spiritual strength by which a wife is able

to tolerate her husband when he fails, the humility to recognize her own failings, and the capacity to enjoy their marriage. Her love for God must be her motivation to pursue her spiritual life. However, if her husband is a carnal believer or an unbeliever, she should never make learning God's Word an issue. Instead, she should quietly learn on her own, never defying her husband's authority by studying in his presence if it bothers him. God will give her quiet moments in which she can learn in spite of any antagonism from her husband. If she fails to find time for the daily nourishment of the Word, she inevitably and perhaps without knowing it shoots herself in the foot, and her marriage hangs on a thin thread, waiting for the first adversity to snap it.

2. *Respond to the love and leadership of her husband through obedience and respect.* Of course, if she is careful in learning and utilizing the biblical principles in her soul, obedience to and respect for her husband will become automatic. Understand, too, that a wife is to respect her husband even if he is out of fellowship or an unbeliever.
3. *Endeavor to beautify her soul more than her outward appearance.* Many women think that if they make themselves attractive to their husbands, their marriages will survive. Nothing could be further from the truth. Whether his wife realizes it or not, sooner or later, a husband gets used to her face and body, but if her inner beauty radiates through her outward appearance, she attains a beauty that is impossible for him to ignore! The Word of God in her soul is the source of that inner beauty.
4. *Support her husband in every way.* As his "help meet" a wife should seek to please her husband in all areas. She should care for the home and the family, but she should also seek to provide pleasant company for him in order to divert him from the pressures of his life. She should work to keep the lines of communication with him open.

The Functions of the Wife

God assigned three major functions to the wife, namely:

1. *Child-bearing:* To the woman He [God] said, "I will greatly multiply your pain in childbirth. In pain you shall bring forth children, yet your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you" (Genesis 3:16).

Because of her role in the fall of man, the woman received God's judgment that she would suffer pain during childbirth. Several thousand years have passed since that judgment was pronounced by God, and the woman still goes through excruciating pain during labor.

Notice God's reminder that though she now has children, her husband must remain the focus of her thoughts and actions because he has authority over her, and her responsibility is to please him above all others, even her children.

2. *Training of children:* Generally, women do a superb job of training children because God made this one of their functions. The Bible puts it this way:

> The rod and reproof [discipline] give wisdom, but a child who gets his way brings shame to his mother (Proverbs 29:15a).

This verse says that an untamed child brings shame, not to his father, although that is implied, but to his mother. Keep in mind that the role of a husband as described in Scriptures is in the area of provision for the family. While he is in the work place sweating, his wife is at home taking care of the children — and sweating, too! Therefore, women bear the burden of training their children. Fathers are not excluded from directing their upbringing. In fact, the presence of a man of virtue enhances tremendously the potential of imbuing his children with virtue.

A youngster will say to his mother, "Who do you think you are?" a million times before saying it once to his father. Children who are raised by single mothers tend to have difficulty adjusting to authority. Children need a father or father figure in their lives. One may say, "We are now in the twenty-first century. Things have changed." Certainly, *times* have changed, but the truth of God's Word never changes.

> The grass withers, the flower fades when the breath of the Lord blows upon it. But certainly the Word of our God stands forever (Isaiah 40:8).

Anyone who tries to interpret the Scriptures based on current events will always err! Mothers must be careful that their lives

remain as God intended: God-centered and husband-centered. A child-centered home produces self-absorbed children. Children become self centered by doting and spoiling. Marriages are damaged and frequently destroyed when women allow their children to take precedence over their husbands.

3. *Taking care of household chores:* A wife's obligation in the home includes but is not limited to putting the house in order, cleaning, doing the laundry, and preparing food for her family. A virtuous wife does not say, "Honey, I washed the dishes last night. It's your turn tonight." Nor does a husband of integrity shift the entire burden of housekeeping to his wife. He helps in any capacity he can.

   If a husband decides to stay home and take care of the children because his wife makes more money than he does, he should know that he has doubled his wife's duties and thus should help in any way he can to reduce the work load of his wife; however, no matter the occupation of the wife outside the home, she still owes her children the motherly attention that they deserve, and she still has primary responsibility for household chores. Her husband and her children are her main job. Any outside employment is merely added on top.

A Virtuous Wife

Beginning with the fall of Adam in the Garden of Eden, the negative impact of women on men is found throughout the Scriptures. Delilah's evil influence over Samson caused his death and the deaths of many others (Judges 16:4-20). Solomon's wives had a wicked influence over him (I Kings 11:1-11). Jezebel influenced her husband to destroy the prophets (1 Kings 18:4, 13) and persecute Elijah (1 Kings 19:2). Haman's wife counseled him to hang Mordecai, one of the great believers of that time (Esther 5:14, 6:13).

A virtuous wife can have an equal but positive influence on her husband and those around her. No one should underestimate the power of a woman who is fulfilling God's will for her life.

> An excellent [virtuous] wife is the crown of her husband (Proverbs 12:4a).

The Hebrew word for virtue is *chayil,* meaning strength, ability, and moral worth. Its Greek equivalent is *arete,* which refers to the excellence or virtue of an individual. According to Webster's New World Dictionary, virtue can be defined as "goodness, right action and thinking, and morality." Any female can be a wife, but not every female is a virtuous wife. In the beginning of this book, I said that I would rather marry the ugliest female in the world with the most beautiful soul than marry the most beautiful female with an ugly soul. I emphatically repeat that truth. God is the One who commands us to put a premium on virtue.

Any wife who aspires to be blessed beyond measure in her marriage should vigorously pursue virtue. Any wife who aspires to enjoy her marriage to the maximum should strive to reach spiritual maturity. Spiritual maturity is synonymous with a virtuous status. When a believing wife reaches this spiritual height, she has developed the capacity to truly love and be blessed.

The virtuous woman is priceless and always finds favor with God. In the Old Testament, Ruth found favor with a wealthy Bethlehemite named Boaz because of her virtue. Boaz said to her,

> "May you be blessed by the Lord, my daughter. You have made this last kindness greater than the first in that you have not gone after young men, whether poor or rich. And now, my daughter, do not fear. I will do for you all that you ask because all my fellow townsmen know that you are a virtuous (*chayil*) woman!" (Ruth 3:8-11)

Boaz recognized Ruth's virtue as did all those who knew her. Remember, however, that a woman is to behave with virtue even when others malign her and treat her unjustly. Virtue responds to the grace of God and does not react to the slurs, apathy, or maltreatment of others. A woman is virtuous because God wills that for her life and for no other reason, certainly not to receive the praise of others.

A virtuous wife is the backbone of her family. She cares for everything in the house without reservation or complaint. She supports her husband when he is overwhelmed, frustrated, depressed, or broken in pieces for one reason or another. Because of her integrity, she tries to blow out the light of uncertainty in his soul through her understanding of God's Word. While she should not serve as a teacher

of Bible doctrine to her husband, she uses her wisdom to guide him to re-open the gate in his soul to biblical wisdom.

> The wise [virtuous] woman builds her house, but the foolish woman tears it down with her own hands (Proverbs 14:1).

Only through the virtue in her soul can a woman "build her house," both physically and spiritually, and strengthen the bonds of love and God-dependence upon which alone her marriage can flourish. Virtue cannot be achieved overnight or even in a year or two, but if a wife is persistent in her spiritual life she can attain this pinnacle in her marriage.

The Bible carefully outlines the qualities of virtue that God intends a wife to have. Let's examine exegetically these qualities as set down by God in Proverbs 31:10-31.

While the Hebrew word *chayil* means virtuous, it can also be translated "wealthy." That is why we previously said that a virtuous wife is priceless. She has an overflowing of wealth in her soul! It is sad that the writer of Proverbs begins his discussion of a virtuous woman by telling us that she is hard to find. This should not be the case, especially in the Church Age, since God has given all believers today an enormous spiritual well from which to draw to attain the state of virtue. God has given every woman today equal privilege and equal opportunity to attain the virtue of a spiritual life lived to maximum glorification of God.

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

The Hebrew noun *leb* is translated heart, which refers to the soul. The Hebrew word *batach* means to trust, confide in someone, to feel safe, to be confident and secure, to rely on. The basic idea of this word is one of firmness or solidity. It expresses a sense of well-being resulting from knowing that the "rug won't be pulled out from under you." Literally, this verse could be rewritten, "The soul of a husband feels safe because he has absolute confidence and trust in his virtuous wife." He trusts her to run their house competently, to raise their children to be virtuous adults, and to be loyal to him. He trusts her in all things because she respects him and his authority in all things.

If you are a virtuous wife, the Bible guarantees that your husband will bet his life on your integrity. If someone accuses you of immoral behavior, your husband will charge like a lion to your defense. He will give you the benefit of the doubt, knowing that you would not jeopardize or bring shame to God's name or your marriage.

A husband has immense respect for a virtuous wife and he cherishes her! Lack of trust by a husband quickly tears a marriage apart. So then, if a wife wants to earn the trust of her husband and, best of all, the cheers and admiration of the elect angels, she needs to advance to spiritual maturity and be crowned with a crown of virtue.

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

A virtuous wife will not entertain any adulterous or sinful thoughts or be involved in any act that might hamper her relationship with God or her husband. She can easily be identified as different from those unrighteous women who ridicule, malign, and judge their husbands. She is quiet, loving her husband in her thoughts as well as her words. She understands clearly the Biblical advice,

> Do not be deceived: Bad company corrupts good morals (I Corinthians 15:33).

> How blessed is the person who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked [or in the company of those with no Biblical standards], or who does not stand in the path of sinners [seducers], or who does not sit in the seat of scoffers! But his delight is in the doctrine of the Lord, and in His law he cogitates day and night. Therefore, he will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in its season, and its leaves do not wither; and whatever he does prospers (Psalm 1:1-3).

Although she has reached spiritual maturity, she continues growing in knowledge and truth with the anticipation of glorifying God to the maximum in her marriage!

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

Before we expound on this verse, we need to know that the fibers from the stem of flax are used in making linen thread. In ancient times, most women wove wool and flax into fabric for clothes for their families; therefore, the Bible tells us, a virtuous woman is not lazy but "looks for wool and flax." This verse emphasizes that a wife of integrity always finds ways to spend her time wisely and that she does so with joy.

> She is like a merchant ship. She brings her food from afar (Proverbs 31:14).

Some women today, especially in Asia and Africa, walk many miles every day, carrying food home from farms and markets. In the Western world, few people walk anywhere. Such was not the case when the Bible was written. Gathering food was time-consuming. This verse is striking because the virtuous wife undertakes the arduous daily provision of food for her family without complaint. Such work may take up her entire day, leaving no time for rest or recreation, but she is content with her life and happy in it because nothing gives her more pleasure than caring for those she loves, especially her husband.

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

God designed marriage so that a wife has the responsibility of preparing the food for her family. Cooking is not a demeaning job but an honorable one. I have heard husbands ask their wives, "Honey, what's for dinner?" Their wives flip their eyelids like swords! Some even become sarcastic and say something like, "Can't you cook?" or "Prepare whatever you want. I'm not cooking!" When any wife makes such a remark, she has put a little crack in her marriage, a crack which will enlarge as other negative comments force their way through. A wife who feels that cooking should be shared with her husband shows that she has not grown spiritually. A husband may enjoy helping with the cooking, but cooking remains the wife's responsibility. On the other hand, husbands should not treat their wives as housemaids. They should be considerate in their requests and approach the dinner table with gratitude in their hearts for the hard work and dedication of their wives. They should thank her for a dinner well prepared and served. Most importantly, they should never complain.

One note for both husband and wife: Because the husband is the leader of the family, he should determine the needs of the family and handle every situation with commonsense. If his wife works harder and longer hours than he does, he should find a way to reduce her burden, even if it entails his cooking for the household or doing the cleaning. He should do this with love and consideration for his wife. After all, this life is a spiritual battleground after which each person, husband and wife, will be evaluated by our Lord Jesus Christ. We should always live our lives as unto the Lord.

> She considers a field and buys it. From her earnings she plants a vineyard (Proverbs 31:16).

We must approach this verse as with all other Scripture with an understanding of the time in which it was written. In the time of the Old Testament, women traveled many miles from their villages to the source of their food. They searched for and bought fertile land suitable for their crops. They planted those crops that would please their husbands.

In other words, a virtuous wife constantly thinks of ways to help her husband because she knows that God has called her to be a helper and partner to him. She is not self-centered, nor does she seek to gratify her own needs above the needs of her family. The phrase "from her earnings" does not mean that she does things separately from her husband. Just as the God-Man, our Lord Jesus Christ, is constantly in tune with His Father's plan, so the virtuous wife is in tune with her husband's plan for their family. She follows his leadership and applies all funds in a way that will honor that leadership as well as glorify God. She always does what he suggests, even if she thinks it a mistake. Maybe it is, but maybe her idea would have been a mistake, too. The issue isn't ideas but authority.

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

A virtuous woman girds herself with spiritual strength through her daily walk with the Lord. She remains constantly faithful to her husband by remaining constantly faithful to her Lord. She understands: "The joy of the Lord is your strength" (Nehemiah 8:10c).

The question then is how can this joy be realized? The Bible has the answer:

> When your words [God's Words] came, I ate [believed] them. They were my joy and heart's delight (Jeremiah 15:16a).

Just as our bodies wither without food so our souls dry up without spiritual nourishment.

A virtuous woman does not become arrogant, saying to herself that she has arrived at spiritual maturity and, therefore, can devote less time to her spiritual growth. She continues to avail herself of sound Bible teaching. She continues applying the truth in her soul to the circumstances of her life. She realizes that her spiritual strength keeps her advancing in God's plan; therefore, she concentrates on beautifying her soul.

But let's not forget that the production of this joy in a believer's soul is totally the work of God the Holy Spirit; therefore, a virtuous wife monitors her life carefully. Whenever the Old Sin Nature overpowers her so that she fails, she doesn't stay down, indulging in self-pity. Rather she exactly follows the Bible's teachings, namely, acknowledging her sin privately to God (I John 1:9) and then moving on (Philippians 4:13).

> A joyful heart is good medicine, but a broken spirit dries up the bones (Proverbs 17:22).

The Hebrew word *yabesh* means to wither, to become dry, to be dried up, to be drained. This word is used most often to describe vegetation that has lost necessary moisture. A wife who has no integrity, no aspiration to grow spiritually, withers like a plant without moisture.

Besides spiritual strength, a woman also needs physical strength. The apostle Paul wrote Timothy,

> For the training of the physical body has limited payoff, but that of the spiritual life has unlimited profitability, having compensation both for this life and for the life to come (I Timothy 4:8).

If we take physical exercise to maintain stamina to accomplish

daily tasks we likewise need spiritual exercise to maintain soul health. Even if physical problems limit our physical exercise, nothing should ever limit our attention to our spiritual life for it brings rewards in time and eternity.

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

The virtuous woman has the spiritual capacity to see and enjoy God's never-ending blessings. and she meditates on the many facets of the grace of God toward her and her family. The light of the Word gives her an inner beauty that is not dimmed by the adversity of even the darkest nights.

> She extends her hand to the poor, and she stretches out her hand to the needy (Proverbs 31:20).

The desire to assist others is an indication of the spiritual well-being of a virtuous wife. Even when she doesn't have enough to share with others, the desire to share is in her thoughts. Understanding God's love and generosity toward her propels her to joyfully care for those in need as well as for the poor. Her generosity is not a means of receiving praise from others. Instead, she focuses on the Lord whom she serves because she knows that the Lord looks on the heart. (I Samuel 16:7b) She is kind to others just as her Lord Jesus Christ is always kind, treating everyone with grace.

> She is not afraid of the snow for her household because all her household is clothed with scarlet (Proverbs 31:21).

To properly explain this verse, we need to examine Proverbs 22:13, which states,

> The lazy person says, "There is a lion outside. I shall be slain in the street" (Proverbs 22:13).

A virtuous wife does not allow even a lion to keep her from fulfilling her responsibility to her family. If the meteorologists say that snow will fall, she does not capitalize on that forecast as reason for not going to work or to the farm to bring food home for the family. She doesn't ignore real danger, but she is always consumed

by her love for her family. In cases of genuine danger, she doesn't misuse this verse as a protection against that danger and put herself at risk. Her family isn't helped if she hurts herself. Commonsense is the cornerstone of spiritual thinking.

> She makes coverings for herself. Her clothing is fine linen and purple (Proverbs 31:22).

A virtuous wife does everything necessary for the comfort and well being of her family. She does so without complaint, with genuine joy and thanksgiving in her heart. Purple is the color of royalty and she knows with absolute confidence that she is royalty in the eyes of her God.

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

This verse underscores the image of royalty begun in verse 4 ("A virtuous wife is the crown of her husband.") and continued with the image of the purple garments of royalty in verse 22. Her husband sits as an equal with the leaders of the land. How his wife presents herself both in words and actions directly affects his prestige. If she has great rapport with him, her joy radiates in her face for everyone to see. She, like every believer, becomes an open letter for the world, believing and unbelieving, to read. The apostle Paul wrote to the believers in Corinth,

> You are my letter [epistle], inscribed on my heart, open, legible, and read by all men. It is plainly evident that you are an epistle for Christ . . . (II Corinthians 3:2-3a).

Unbelievers pay close attention to a believer's attitude toward the grace of God. If a believer testifies to the goodness of God toward him even in times of adversity, unbelievers pause to consider the source of such inner happiness. Hence, when a believing wife shows an inner joy that baffles the unbelieving world, some unbelievers will desire to have such a life. In such a way, a virtuous wife serves as a crown to her husband and a living testimony to the matchless grace of our great God.

> She makes linen garments and sells them, and she supplies belts to tradesmen (Proverbs 31:24).

This verse shows her continual effort to fulfill her role as co-partner in marriage and to glorify God to the maximum. She does not shift the entire burden of providing for the family to her husband but joyfully helps in any way she can. She is not bitter because she has to work, but rather she rejoices in the privilege of helping her family.

> She clothes herself with spiritual strength and dignity, and she smiles at the future (Proverbs 31:25).

Strength and dignity emphasize her soul, where spiritual strength and dignity are formed. You would agree with me that every normal person wears clothes. Likewise in the spiritual life. The individual who studies and applies God's Word regularly clothes himself in armor that protects him from the devil's world. The one who fails to do so is clothed only in rags, vulnerable to every dart and missile from Satan and his demon army.

The virtuous wife "smiles at the future." She has confidence in the One who anchors her trust. She is not afraid of what the future holds for her and her beloved family but insulates herself with the Word of God.

> Blessed is the person who trusts in the Lord, whose confidence is in Him. He will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream. It does not fear when heat comes; its leaves are always green. It has no worries in a year of drought, and it never fails to bear fruit (Jeremiah 17:7-8).

A virtuous woman can be relaxed because she has absolute confidence that God will continue to provide for her and her family. She knows that God is sovereign and that ultimately His plan for her entire household will prevail. Because she knows that He loves her and those she loves with a perfect and unchanging love, she knows that everything that happens in life is intended by God for blessing.

> She opens her mouth in wisdom, and the teaching of kindness [Hebrew: *chesed* : mercy, grace and virtuous love] is on her tongue (Proverbs 31:26).

We have noted that wisdom is from God and the virtuous wife constantly reinforces herself with wisdom from God's Word and applies it to her life. She teaches her children to know and Love God. She is grace-oriented and thus able to show mercy, grace, and virtue love to everyone — worthy or unworthy!

> She watches over the affairs of her household and does not eat the bread of idleness (Proverbs 31:27).

She is not extravagant but safeguards everything that belongs to her family. Laziness finds no place in her lifestyle.

> Her children arise and call her blessed. Her husband also, and he praises her, saying, "Many women do noble things, but you surpass them all" (Proverbs 31:28-29).

Even though her worth is easily seen by her family, a virtuous wife may be held in low esteem by the rest of the world. She doesn't care. She lives her life as unto the Lord, not as unto people. The love and adoration of her family are immeasurable blessings to her, but they are not her primary reason for being virtuous. Her objective is always to glorify her Lord because she knows that in doing so she will bring honor and blessing to her husband and family.

Her Physical Beauty

> Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting; but a woman who is in awe of the Lord is to be praised. Give her the reward she has earned, and let her works bring praise at the city gate (Proverbs 31:30-31).

A beautiful woman is the best scenery in the world, but her body is mortal. Only her soul lasts. Inner beauty of the soul is the greatest beauty and the only lasting beauty. Where there is no spiritual life, there is no inner beauty.

Since the beginning of time, women have recognized that the structure of their bodies is different from that of their husbands, and they have endeavored to preserve and beautify their bodies. There is nothing sinful about women wearing makeup if they can afford it and doing other cosmetic and clothing changes that help highlight the beauty God has given them. In fact, a believing wife should beautify

herself according to her means. God has beautified her, and she is to maintain this beauty so that her husband will continually behold her glory. She is to adorn herself with proper clothing, modestly and discreetly (I Timothy 2:9). However, anyone who thinks about his body overly much — whether male or female — is indulging in self-absorption. Only the arrogant and immature person has a fixation on self and physical appearance. God expects us to be comfortable with the way we look because we are comfortable with our souls.

Because marriage is basically a soul relationship, the development of a beautiful soul should take precedence over the development of a beautiful body. Every woman should emphasize the beautifying of her soul through learning and applying Bible doctrine. We can easily ascertain the cost of lipstick, diamonds, hair dye, and such, but the inner beauty of a woman is priceless.

> And let not your adornment be merely external — such as trying a new hair style, wearing gold jewelry, or putting on dresses; but let it be rather the private person of the heart, with the incorruptible quality of a thoughtful and self-controlled demeanor, which is of great value in the sight of God (I Peter 3:3-4).

The apostle Peter is not saying that women should not wear decent or even expensive dresses if they can afford them. Nor is he saying that women should over-emphasize their female attributes, thereby causing immature believers to sin. He is saying that a beautiful body is worthless without a beautiful soul. A beautiful soul transforms an ugly body into one of radiating beauty. When physical beauty fades with age, virtue makes love grow.

Women should adorn their souls by obeying their husbands. Because of her submissiveness to her husband Abraham, Sarah earned paragraphs in the pages of the infallible Word of God as well as an inheritance both in time and eternity to come.

> For this way in former times [the Old Testament period], the women of integrity used to adorn themselves, exuding absolute confidence in God and submitting to their own husbands (I Peter 3:5).

Because of their confidence in God and their submission to the authority of their husbands, these women were lovely and loved by their husbands. Their inner beauty was obvious to all. For example:

> Sarah obeyed Abraham and called him lord. You have become her [spiritual] daughters by doing good [fulfilling the spiritual life] and by not letting anything terrify you (I Peter 3:6 ISV).

God changed Sarai's name, which meant contentious, to Sarah, which meant princess, when she became a mature believer through the utilization of the spiritual life of that time. One of the great ways she showed her inner beauty and spiritual maturity was by calling her husband "lord" or "sir." She gladly obeyed him in all things. A woman's beauty comes from trusting the Lord and from living within the parameters that He has established for marriage, especially in respecting and obeying her husband.

Wives, ask yourselves these important questions: Are you a virtuous woman? Are you making spiritual progress? Do you make the Word of God your uttermost priority? Does God smile as He regards your life?

One thing is crystal clear: No wife can fully enjoy marriage or glorify God to the maximum without the attainment of virtue, which comes with spiritual maturity.

Chapter Eight

Preparation for Marriage

Everything honorable in life is attained by preparation. A believer in the Lord Jesus Christ should never enter marriage unprepared. If he does, then he should ready himself for disaster.

> Therefore, I do not run like a man running aimlessly. I do not fight like a man beating the air. No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize (I Corinthians 9:26-27).

As we prepare for marriage, we don't want to run in circles or beat the air, achieving nothing. We want to reach the point of wisdom that prepares us for our right spouse when God brings her to us. Therefore, our preparation must be methodical and consistent and bring momentum with it as a by-product. The momentum that carries us *to* marriage is the very momentum required to carry us through in marriage. This momentum has one source only, the perception and application of Bible doctrine, and is based on one motivation only, reciprocal love for God.

Preparation for marriage occurs in the soul; hence, any believer who aspires to be involved in the holy union of marriage should count the cost of failure in that marriage, lest he give the devil an opportunity to ridicule our Lord. The big question he should ask himself is, "Am I mature enough spiritually to be involved with another person's problems?" Keep in mind that once you marry you are united with that individual for as long as you both live! You have instantly combined your problems with theirs, much more than doubling the pressures, testings, trials, and distractions in your life.

Cautions to Consider Before Marrying

Let's examine a few basic principles and cautions to consider before marriage. Forewarned is forearmed!

- Know your future spouse before you marry. Knowledge gives discernment to love and prevents gullibility. Love can flourish only in an environment of knowledge. Make sure your knowledge of your future spouse in no way causes you concern, anxiety, or confusion. If you have any reservations, wait! Don't marry until those reservations have been resolved and you have peace. Let peace be your umpire.
- Calmness of soul with regard to every aspect of your intended spouse's personality is an indication that you have found your right spouse and that you are spiritually mature enough to marry.
- We have previously established that marriage is not designed by God to solve human problems; therefore, believers should never get into marriage with the false hope that it will lessen or even eradicate their problems. Godly marriage can produce happiness even in the middle of a difficult situation.
- Neither has God designed marriage to change anyone. People often have the false hope that their loved one will surely change once they are married. That is a myth and wishful thinking. No one can change anyone else. The only tools available to you are the ones to change yourself.
- Before marriage, you must recognize that though a true blending will occur in marriage, both you and your spouse will remain individuals.
- The foundation of a marriage lies in similarities. The excitement lies in complementary differences.
- Your right man or right woman is different from you; but, like you, he has an Old Sin Nature, and that Old Sin Nature is guaranteed to bring new temptations and problems into your life.
- A happy, successful marriage requires both negative and positive action. You must remove some things from your life before marriage, and you must build other things into your marriage.
- Don't be drawn into marriage by peer pressure! You shouldn't allow anyone to talk you into marriage. Marriage is a test that you take alone. "My parents, sisters, brothers, and/or friends made me marry that loser" (even assuming he is) is an inexcusable plea in the Courtroom of Heaven! Marry only when you know that you are ready, and marry only the person that *you* choose. Weigh everyone's opinions and advice, and then make the decision yourself.

- You, and not your parents, should choose your spouse. Parents have the right to counsel you with regard to the person you have elected to marry; however, the ultimate decision should be yours. If your choice is wrong, you alone will bear the consequences of that choice. You will not, subsequently, be able to shift the blame to your parents for having influenced you to marry against your will.
- Don't allow yourself to be drawn into marriage because of the outward manifestations of happiness in those who are already married. Don't be fooled by their big smiles. Some marriages are truly as happy as they appear, but many are fakes! Such facades can lure the unwary to marry hastily, only to be disappointed later.
- Children and teenagers — or mental adolescents — are not qualified for marriage. Marriage to an emotional child, whatever his age, will become slavery.
- Teenagers who leave broken homes and join themselves in holy matrimony, believing that marriage will solve their problems, have merely traded one seemingly intolerable situation for another.
- Believers only marry believers. They should both be actively pursuing their spiritual life and growing to maturity.
- A loser in life will be a loser in marriage. Be a winner and marry a winner.
- A young person without values and virtue becomes an old person without values and virtue. Don't marry him! He will remain a loser unless he becomes positive to God and His Word.
- A woman who loves a man's power or money is a user and a loser. Don't marry her!
- Some women will never know true love because they have approbation lust, the need for praise and honor from many men. No woman should marry unless she can set aside all other men. She must be able to give total honor to her husband alone. If she can't focus on him only, she shouldn't marry him. Men, don't marry women who flirt with other men. Such women are arrogant and self-centered.
- Don't manipulate anyone into marrying you. Don't allow yourself to be manipulated.
- Don't marry anyone who is unkind to others. He will be unkind to you as well.
- Forget about outward appearance because "all that glitters is not gold." Never marry because of outward beauty. Look for beauty in the soul.

- Don't marry to gain a meal ticket, to escape an unpleasant home life, to impress others, to assuage loneliness, or to legalize sex.
- Choose carefully — you are marrying for life — God says "I hate divorce." Do not marry with the idea that if it doesn't work you can get out of it.

After all of these "don'ts" about marriage, how can you recognize the "dos"?

The Three Stages of Love

In order to be prepared for the time when God will introduce you to the person He has for you, you need to understand the three stages of love. You mustn't allow yourself to be blindsided by the first stage of love but instead be prepared to wait for the second stage to kick in.

Attraction or infatuation is the first stage of love, the tunnel-vision stage. Don't marry when you are blinded by love!

Two people are always brought together romantically by an initial physical or emotional attraction to each other. They like what they feel. During this stage, they have a tendency to idealize the good traits of the other and downplay or refuse to see the bad. Infatuation produces an abundance of heat but very little light. No one can talk sense into anyone living under the rosy glow of new love.

People in this stage haven't had time to gain an insight into each other's soul; therefore, no depth of admiration or respect is possible, only blind devotion. Any personal love is based solely on the attractiveness of the object; therefore, the object must remain attractive for that personal love to continue. Personal love based on attraction always fades with the fading attractiveness of the object — or the greater attractiveness of someone else!

Emotion drives attraction, overpowering the soul and blotting out virtue and wisdom, everything that makes rational thought possible. While emotion can often respond to love, it is not love. Emotion has no ability to think or reason. Emotional arrogance converts reality into illusion and hallucination, and it is an unstable foundation for this stage of love. Often, emotion emphasizes premarital sex. When sexual intimacy precedes the next stage of love, compatibility, personal love is eventually destroyed, and boredom sets in. There is little chance of ever moving past the attraction stage once premarital sex begins.

Again, don't marry in the attraction stage! When attraction in *romance* (dating) becomes disappointment or disillusion, the relationship can be ended. When attraction in *marriage* becomes disappointment or disillusion, the marriage must continue because marriage is for as long as you both shall live.

Compatibility is the second stage of love, the enlightenment stage. Don't marry until this stage. Compatibility in both the divine institution of marriage and Christian marriage is the capacity of a man and woman to combine and remain together without undesirable after-effects, such as boredom, irritation, hatred, or even repugnance. For Christians, true compatibility is mutual flexibility and tolerance motivated by the three categories of virtue love: Personal love for God the Father, virtue love for all mankind, and occupation with Christ.

A spiritual believer must be discerning in courtship because romantic love needs spiritual compatibility as well as a high regard for one another based on personal and virtue love. Both man and woman should be compatible in their desire to grow to spiritual maturity. A spiritual believer should never marry a perpetually carnal believer. (Remember, a believer should never marry an unbeliever.)

In the compatibility stage, a man and woman have learned the strengths and weaknesses of each other and are comfortable with both. They recognize the sins, failures, flaws, and weaknesses of the other, but because of their own personal integrity their love is not diminished. In humility, they recognize similar and equal sins, failures, flaws, and weaknesses in themselves!

Compatibility is the problem-solving stage of love when believers use their priesthood and the biblical orientation to solve their problems. Each takes responsibility for his decisions.

The greatest manifestation of compatibility is in conversation, through which most of the problems of a relationship are resolved. A successful marriage becomes one long communication that seems all too short.

Premarital sex destroys the standard of personal virtue on which compatibility is based. Sex outside of marriage is always wrong, even for those who know that they are right for each other.

Rapport is the third stage of love, a never-ending conversation and communion between souls, which takes years to develop. At this point, which occurs in marriage itself, two believers share fundamental spiritual values and have similar or equal capacities for life, love, and

happiness. They share an understanding of their own worth in the eyes of God. They have a shared personal sense of destiny.

A husband and wife who have reached the rapport stage of marriage have:

1. Sympathy: An affinity between each other so that anything that affects one affects the other. They share a mutual affection and allegiance.
2. Synergy: A cooperative interaction among merged parts of the whole that creates an increased combined effect greater than the sum of the two. Each spouse provides an enormous stimulation and strength to the other in all areas of life.
3. Empathy: An understanding of the other's feelings and ideas at all times as well as the capacity to enter into the feelings and ideas of the other.

In the rapport stage, a husband and wife reap the dividends of a shared spiritual life. They have coalesced into a powerful, cohesive, synergistic spiritual life and a meaningful continual fellowship with God. They have wisdom in their dealings with each other, other people, and their children.

The rapport stage must be reached in order for a husband and wife to have a corporate testimony, the highest witness of the Church Age and the fulfillment of the divine mandates regarding marriage in Ephesians 5:22, 25 and Colossians 3:18-19. In rapport, the wisdom coming from learning and applying Bible truth produces the phenomenal joy designed by God for marriage. No greater happiness is possible for a human being on earth.

Self-Examination for the Christian Man

If you are an unmarried Christian man who aspires to be united in marriage, you should examine yourself carefully in the mirror of your soul to determine if you are spiritually mature enough to enter marriage. Answer these questions silently in your soul as unto the Lord.

1. Are you mature physically, emotionally, and mentally? Only an adult has the capacity to succeed in marriage.
2. Do you understand women from the divine viewpoint? You must learn the biblical teachings about women in general before you enter into marriage with the one woman God has prepared for

you. Only through this understanding can you love your woman with the enduring devotion she both needs and deserves. (Some people outlive their spouse and God often provides another person made just for them.)

3. Do you have a job with a future? Are you able to support a wife and family? Some men search for women with lucrative careers in areas such as medicine, engineering, or law. This is wrong, a sign of laziness on the part of that man and, worst of all, a reflection of maladjustment in his soul. God designed the man to provide for his family.

   There is nothing sinful about men and women combining their efforts for the benefit of both; however, when a man sits at home while his million-dollar wife sweats at work, he is disobeying God (Genesis 3:17-19). Indeed, such a marriage can begin to crack after the honeymoon if the man has no means of supporting his wife and is not making serious efforts to do so.
4. Have you given the Lord the highest priority in your life? Does Bible study bring joy to your heart? Do you look forward to studying under your pastor-teacher?
5. Do you have the integrity of soul necessary to be a good leader? Nothing, including learning, good looks, strength, power, and money, can compensate for lack of leadership in a husband. Wisdom produces good leadership, and wisdom is nothing but using biblical principles to make God-honoring decisions.
6. Are you willing to make the sacrifices necessary as the leader in marriage? The greater the leader, the greater the sacrifices. It calls for discipline, humility, integrity, courage.
7. Are you willing to accept responsibility before God for your wife's actions as well as your own? As the authority in the family, you are responsible for the actions of your entire family.
8. Is the love of Christ resident in your soul? Do you practice the self-examination about the love of Christ as the apostle Paul described it?

   > Love is patient and kind and is not jealous; love does not envy or brag and is not arrogant; does not act unbecomingly [rude]; it does not seek its own, is not provoked [easily angered], does not take into account a wrong suffered It keeps no record of wrongs . . . (I Corinthians 13:4).

Do you reflect these characteristics of love in your own life? Are you patient with those who have not attained your level of spiritual maturity? Are you willing to stay in the background, never putting yourself forward, but always remembering that God in His grace gave you everything? Can you love with virtue love those who have difficulty meeting your standards?

9. Do you have a forgiving spirit? Are you willing to abolish once and for all any mental list of wrongs done to you? Many men have a tendency to accumulate wrongs done to them by their loved one, resulting in a bitterness of soul that shatters their marriage. You must never link current failures to past ones. You must forgive and forget just as Christ forgave you and welcomed you with open arms to share with Him the inheritance of His Father. The Bible urges everyone to bear with each other and forgive *whatever* grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgives you (Colossians 3:13).

   Think of it this way: Through personal sins as well as your Old Sin Nature, you have wronged God beyond measure. At salvation, He forgave you completely for all pre-salvation sin. Once and for all, He destroyed your ticket to the Lake of Fire. When we confess He forgives those sins you have acknowledged as well as all unknown sins. What kind of wrong can people (including your wife!) do to you that is equal to that which God has freely and graciously forgiven? Memorize Scriptures instead of wrongs.

Self-Examination for the Christian Woman

You unmarried Christian women should also take a self-examination, asking yourselves in the privacy of your souls the following questions:

1. Are you mature physically, emotionally, and mentally? Let me repeat: Only an adult is capable of success in marriage.
2. Are you a student of the Bible? For you to succeed in marriage and in life, you must be able to truthfully say that following the Lord has the number-one spot on your scale of values.
3. Are you more mindful of your inner beauty than of your outward appearance? To succeed in marriage, you must pay more attention to that which goes into your soul than that which goes on your face and body.

4. Do you have the humility necessary to willingly obey and respect the leadership of your husband? For a woman considering marriage, it boils down to this unique question: Are you ready to be under the leadership and authority of a man other than your father?

   If your answer is "No," by all means postpone marriage until you can say with certainty, "Yes, I am ready to submit myself under the leadership of this man I am marrying." The relationship that exists between you and your husband is designed by God to be the same as exists between God the Father and God the Son. As we have previously studied, God the Son responds to the leadership of God the Father, not because the Father is superior, but because integrity is the essence of each member of the Trinity!

   To succeed in marriage, you must develop the humility that enabled Christ to set aside the power of His deity and submit Himself to the limitations of a human body. If you fail to develop this humility in your soul before marriage, you should expect difficulty in marriage.

5. Are you willing to disclose your finances to your husband? You must be willing to share everything with him. When a wife says, "My money is my money. It's none of my husband's business," in essence, she is saying, "My husband and I are both holding onto the steering wheel in one car — and I'm sure not letting go!" The Old Testament believer Amos posed the question, "Do two walk together unless they have agreed to do so?" (Amos 3:3)

   In other words, can a husband and wife truly live in harmony while each is functioning in his own way? Can they effectively manage their money when each has his own separate checkbook, which the other can't verify? If you rationalize, saying, "I'm not sure this marriage will work; therefore, I need to hold on to what I have," you are entering into marriage with suspicion and fear. These issues need to be resolved before marriage. What many have failed to realize is that once two singles are blended in marriage, the result is one whole unit. While their souls cannot be mixed, they share everything they have. The wife is not excluded from what the husband brought into the marriage and vice versa. While the husband may be in charge of the family's accounts, his wife is not excluded from access to those accounts. The bottom line is this: Once biblical principles are learned and applied, they eliminate fear of uncertainty.

Trusting God During the Waiting Period

God is responsible for providing the right man with his right woman at the right time. If you would recall, when God created Adam, He waited before creating the woman. Then once He created the woman, *He* brought her to the man (Genesis 2:23). I want you to notice Adam's reaction. He immediately recognized that she was different from all of the animals that he had named. He also recognized that she was his rib, thus underscoring the importance of waiting for the one designed by God to fulfill him.

The in-depth meaning of the Hebrew word used in Genesis 2:23 to describe Adam's reaction upon seeing Eve is "Hooray." He recognized her as the perfect one for him, and he was elated, excited, over the moon.

> Delight yourself in the Lord, and He will give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the Lord. Trust in Him also, and He will do this (Psalm 37:4-5).

> Wait for the Lord. Be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord (Psalm 27:14).

While a man waits for God to bring his right woman, he is to play his own part, namely delighting himself in the Lord by giving the study of the Word the highest priority, trusting the Lord to fulfill His promise with regard to his right woman. The woman as she waits is to do likewise. God will provide each his right partner at exactly the right time. God promises that He will bring you together with your right spouse, and God never breaks His promises. Sit back and relax and wait for Him to deliver.

Many believers spend their lives searching for their right spouse instead of spending that time preparing to *be* the right spouse for whomever the Lord brings to them. Bringing our right spouse to us is God's responsibility. Having the spiritual maturity to be the right spouse is our responsibility. Marriage is not about *finding* the right person but about *being* the right person.

A word of caution: Do not learn Bible truth so that God will provide a good spouse for you. Always learn His Word because you love Him and want to learn His thinking. Remember that no one can ever bribe God (II Chronicles 17:9).

God is a perfect matchmaker. No other matchmaker is needed, including anxious mothers who are afraid they won't have grandchildren as soon as they wish! Billions of years ago, God in His omniscience knew everyone's right spouse as well as her exact location in time. God knows the time, place, and means by which He will cause two individuals who are made for each other to come together.

The ultimate test in the spiritual life, especially for the single believer, is in the area of patience. No one likes to wait, but that's exactly what God wants us to do — wait patiently. There is great profit that comes from waiting on the Lord, but a high price to be paid for not waiting. King David, a man after God's own heart, encouraged believers to "rest in the Lord and wait *patiently* for Him" (Psalm 37:7a).

You are far better off being single than marrying anyone other than your right spouse. God wants to bless you with the right person at the right time, and He expects you to wait on Him. He promises that those who wait for [Him] shall not be put to shame (Isaiah 49:23c).

That promise alone should be sufficient for you to wait. Many people say, "I've waited so long already! How long can I continue waiting?" The Bible has the answer:

> Yet those who wait for the Lord will renew their strength. They will mount up with wings like eagles. They will run and not get tired. They will walk and not become weary (Isaiah 40:31).

God does not tell us the length of time to wait. He just tells us to wait. He wants us to vigorously renew our strength daily by study of His Word. We are to close the doors of our hearts to human solutions. It is far better to wait 50 years for your right woman and live with her for only one year full of inexpressible happiness than to marry someone who will nag you for 50 years. Let me put it this way: I would rather die while I am waiting for the Lord than marry a woman who will set me ablaze with bitterness and fury for the rest of my life.

> He who has obtained a good wife [a woman of virtue, his right woman] finds a good thing and obtains favor [a grace blessing] from the Lord (Proverbs 18:22).

Whoever waits on the Lord to bring him his right woman receives grace from the Lord because her virtue love will endure and never fail.

A wife is a gift from the Lord only if she is *virtuous*; however, husbands, remember that your view of your wife determines the success of your marriage. If you don't view your wife as being perfect for you, she will react to your lack of love and faith, and you both will be miserable.

You may say, "Well, I need to marry soon. I'm getting old." God knows your age. Relax in His perfect timing.

You don't need to date while you wait. God will bring your right spouse to you regardless of your location, regardless of the time you spend or don't spend around members of the opposite sex.

Women, the current idea that you must thank your date for a nice time by kissing him or necking with him if he spent a lot of money is ludicrous! Physical response should come only from soul response, and you can't determine true soul response after only a date or two. Relax. If he's your right man, he will want to be with you purely for the enjoyment of being with you.

Avoiding the Temptation of the Eyes

God gives us eyes so that we can behold His creation and give Him the glory, but if we aren't careful, our eyes can deceive us. Eve's eyes got her into trouble and caused her to disobey God.

> When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a *delight to the eyes* . . . she took from it and ate (Genesis 3:6).

What the eyes see can directly affect the soul.

> The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are good, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eyes are bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness! (Matthew 6:22-23)

Our eyes can make us think we are in love! We behold a handsome man or a beautiful woman. We are beguiled by their outward appearance. We may even think that they must be the right one for us. We may hope it! We might even marry the wrong person because we have been charmed by our eyes.

A believer who relies on God's direction and provision will never rely on outward appearance in finding his right mate. One may

say, "Well, I sure don't want to marry an ugly lady!" Or "I'd never marry any man who isn't handsome!" If you think that way, you are a baby in your spiritual growth. You haven't yet reached the level of spiritual maturity whereby you know that God will provide the perfect person for you. God looks at the inner person, not the outer and so must you (I Samuel 16:7).

I pause to reaffirm: You are far better off marrying the ugliest person in the world who is your right partner than marrying the most attractive person on earth who is not the one God created specifically for you!

Praying While You Wait

Prayer demands an understanding of God's thinking. Should you pray for God to bring your right spouse to you? Of course! Even though God has already made that promise He still wants you to pray. Ask that you would have the patience and dedication to use this time of waiting to study the Bible so that you will be prepared spiritually when God brings your right partner to you.

> House and wealth are an inheritance from fathers [blessing by association], but a prudent wife is from the Lord (Proverbs 91:14).

The waiting believer should arm himself with the above words, understanding that if he is following God's plan, then God will cause him to meet his right woman. A prudent wife is *from* the Lord. You can inherit many things from your ancestors, but your right woman comes directly from the Lord. He leads her to you, but you have to wait for her. The "prudent wife" is a believer who is advancing in her spiritual life. She is a match for you in all ways: body, soul and spirit.

The Cost of Not Waiting on the Lord

Many believers find it difficult to wait on the Lord for anything, but especially with regard to marriage. They ignore God's timing and jump into marriage because of peer pressure, loneliness, financial problems, or a desire to avoid fornication. Some are frantically searching for happiness. If you want to get married for any of those reasons, don't! I want you to know that you'll have the same problems during marriage. Not until you deal with them in the light of the

Word of God will they cease to be problems. In fact, marriage will only add to your problems!

The cost of not waiting on the Lord even if He delays (Habakkuk 2:3) can be enormous! We will now examine the disastrous results for two Old Testament believers who failed to wait on the Lord. God put these examples in the Bible so that we might learn from them and avoid the dangers of taking things out of God's hands and putting them into our own.

Moses at Mount Sinai

> When the people [of Israel] saw that Moses was so long in coming down from the mountain, they gathered around Aaron and said, 'Come and make us gods who will go before us. As for this fellow Moses who brought us up out of Egypt, we don't know what has happened to him.' Aaron answered them, 'Take off the gold earrings that your wives, your sons, and your daughters are wearing and bring them to me.' So all the people took off their earrings and brought them to Aaron. He took what they handed him and made it into an idol cast in the shape of a calf, fashioning it with a tool. Then they said, 'These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt' (Exodus 32:1-4).

Often, when believers are not occupied with the Lord, they become irrational. Such was the case with the Israelites while Moses was on the mountain talking with God and receiving the Ten Commandments. They quickly forgot the One who had delivered them from slavery in Egypt. They transferred the glory of their great deliverance to a man-made calf of gold! They traded the Creator for a statue of their own creation! They forgot that they had waited for 400 years in Egypt before God could deliver them, and irrationally they became impatient at having to wait 39 days for Moses to come down from the mountain. They forgot that God never acts capriciously and that He must have had a reason for the delay. Because they refused to conform to God's thinking, their irrationality steered them away from God.

This same irrationality and impatience with God attacks us as believers when we stop looking at things from God's point of view. The Israelites refused to wait for God's timing, and because of this

impatience, God punished them severely. (Exodus 32:35) Many died in the wilderness, never reaching the Promised Land. In His love, God always punishes us when we desert Him and substitute our plan and timing for His.

King Saul

King Saul is another believer who substituted his plan for God's and suffered tremendously for his lack of patience.

> The Philistines assembled to fight Israel, amassing three thousand charioteers and soldiers as numerous as the sand on the seashore. When the men of Israel saw that their situation was critical and that their army was hard pressed, they hid in caves and thickets, among the rocks, and in pits and cisterns. Some Hebrews even crossed the Jordan to the land of Gilgal, and all the troops with him [Saul] were trembling with fear. Saul waited for seven days, the time set by Samuel; but Samuel did not come to Gilgal, and Saul's men began to scatter. So he [King Saul] said, "Bring me the burnt offering and the fellowship offerings." And Saul offered up the burnt offering. Just as he finished making the offering, Samuel arrived, and Saul went out to greet him. "What have you done?" asked Samuel. Saul replied, "When I saw that the men were scattering, and you did not come at the set time, and that the Philistines are assembling at Michmash, I thought, 'Now the Philistines will come down against me at Gilgal, and I have not sought the Lord's favor. So I felt compelled to offer the burnt offering.'" "You acted foolishly," Samuel said. "You have not kept the command the Lord your God gave you. If you had, He [God] would have established your kingdom over Israel for all time. But now your kingdom will not endure. The Lord has sought a man after his own heart and appointed him leader over His people because you have not [waited, and as a result you failed to keep] kept the Lord's command" (I Samuel 13:5-13).

What happened in I Samuel 13 is interesting. The Israelites customarily sought God's advice and instruction before they engaged in war with their enemies (I Samuel 7:7-10). King Saul did just that (I Samuel 13:9). So why did God condemn him? Because he twisted

God's commandment to suit his own timetable. God prohibited the king of Israel from being a spiritual leader, an office set apart for the priests, in this case for Samuel. King Saul decided to bypass this restriction because he thought he had acceptable reasons for going to God directly and not waiting for Samuel: Saul's military men were scattering and Saul felt immediate action by God was necessary to keep the army together; Samuel didn't come the day he promised (I Samuel 10:8); and Saul felt that a sacrifice was essential if the Philistines were to be prevented from overthrowing them (I Samuel 13:11). While these reasons were legitimate, no reason is good enough to justify disobedience to God's mandates. Samuel asked Saul,

> "Does the Lord delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the voice of the Lord? To obey [God] is better than sacrifice" (I Samuel 15:22).

King Saul lost his great blessings in time and eternity simply because he did not wait upon the Lord. Would you emulate the impatience of King Saul and of the Israelites of the Exodus generation? Or are you willing to wait for God to provide you with your right spouse at His own perfect time? It pays to wait on the Lord; and it costs dearly not to wait on Him. King David said,

> I was young and now I am old, yet I have never seen the righteous forsaken (Psalm 37:25a).

The Lord never fails any believer who is growing in grace and waiting on His provision — not in the times of Moses or Saul, not now, and not ever! So, young men and young women, all you need is to wait for Him. He *will* provide.

Song of Solomon: Recognizing Your God-Given Partner

You may ask, "How will I recognize my right spouse?" That is God's prerogative. He will assist you. Some know quickly, but with some the recognition grows and grows. But either way there is an identification — a combination of excitement and calmness of soul. God will guide you.

For such is God, our God forever and ever; He will guide us till death (Psalm 48:14).

All you do as you wait is maintain fellowship with God through frequent confession of sin and the consistent study of God's Word. Be assured, however, that you will not recognize your right spouse through dreams, visions, or prophesy; God no longer communicates to us through these media (Hebrews 1:1, 2; Revelation 22:18, 19).

God used a portion of the Song of Solomon to explain His plan of recognition to us. Solomon was a man of wisdom, but because of his fornication he had so much scar tissue[15] on his soul that he was unable to relate to his right woman, the Shulamite woman. In fact, scar tissue on his soul made it impossible for her to be his right woman. Through his own actions, he had shattered the bond between them that God intended.

When Solomon discovered the Shulamite woman, he wanted her above all other women; he erroneously assumed she would not be able to resist him. After all, he was exceedingly handsome and powerful, and he had more wealth than anyone in the world. Even so, she felt nothing but pity for him. Because of God's Word in her soul, she remained faithful to her right man, the shepherd lover, even though they were apart.

The following verses, most of which refer to the Shulamite woman and her right man, explain the ways we can recognize the one God has graciously created for us alone.

1. Your right man/right woman is the one person you can never forget. You can't erase him from your soul. "Tell me, O thou, whom my soul loves . . ." (Song of Solomon 1:7).

   Someone who turns you on physically but is not in your soul is not right for you. The right one will be in your soul first. Physical attraction is not eliminated, of course, but soul attraction is the key. Young people have empty souls which they need to fill with divine viewpoint from Bible study so that they will have an accurate basis upon which to recognize their right partner at the right time. This recognition will occur in their souls, not just in their bodies.

[15] Scar tissue is the concept of "hardening of the heart." Negative volition toward God or Bible doctrine puts scar tissue on the soul; that is, the heart becomes hardened toward God and His ways. Promiscuity, drug addiction, alcoholism, or any other frantic search for happiness puts scar tissue on the soul and the believer then has no capacity for soul activity with people or God.

2. The personal love necessary for marriage comes from knowledge.

   "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth because his love is better than wine" (Song of Solomon 1:2).

   Just as a person learns about the quality and uses of wine, so you need to learn about your right person under all conditions. If your love remains constant when he is moody or angry as well as when he is pleasant and loving, then that person is right for you.
3. The love of a right man protects his right woman whether they are together or apart.

   "He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner [standard of protection] over me was love" (Song of Solomon 2:4).

   A bundle of myrrh is my well-beloved to me. It [the bundle of myrrh] shall lie all night between my breasts" (Song of Solomon 1:13).

   Her right man's banner protects her when they are together. Everyone knows that she is his. When they are apart, she remembers him through the myrrh, the sweet fragrance of which brings forth loving memories of him. She is protected in his absence by this fragrance of memories. This is a beautiful picture of God's Word keeping the believer from temptation.
4. Love to be true must come from free will.

   ". . . do not stir up or awake my love, till it [love] pleases [from its own volition]" (Song of Solomon 2:7).

   Any man who seeks to destroy or coerce the volition of a woman is the wrong man for her! The right man recognizes that any love that isn't freely given isn't worth having. A woman who is positive toward a man through her own free will becomes aggressive in her desire to please him.
5. True love recognizes his love's voice.

   The voice of my beloved . . . my beloved spoke and said to me, "Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away" (Song of Solomon 2:8, 10).

True love recognizes the moods and feelings of his right one through the tone of her voice! Every nuance has meaning for the one who fulfills his soul.

6. A woman's love responds to her right man when he is present as well as when he is absent. Her soul "burns" for him. "Burning" is a continuous fire between right man and right woman, a desire to get into each other's soul and from there into each other's body. Her right man's aggressiveness and passion will be consistent and will satisfy her soul and, after marriage, her body .

   [When we are together,] his left hand is under my head, and his right hand embraces me (Song of Solomon 2:6).

   By night on my bed, I sought him whom my soul loves [even though he was absent]. I sought him, but I didn't find him (Song of Solomon 3:1).

   A modern translation might be that your right man "turns you on." Even when he is absent, your thoughts of him make you desire him. This is not a normal libido; any normal, healthy body has that at times. This is a feeling beyond libido, an insatiability to the point of total desire and total surrender that excludes even natural pride. This desire is constant in contrast to libido, which comes and goes.

   Her [love's] flames are the flames of fire, a most intense flame (Song of Solomon 8:6c).

   The fire is the passion, the power, the intensity of right man/right woman love, the fire that never stops burning.

   Many waters [pressures, disasters, difficulties, misunderstandings, lies, sins] cannot quench [soul] love (Song of Solomon 8:7).

   Water puts out fire, but all the water in the world can't put out the fire of true love. Under the pressures and problems of life, the flames only increase. Nothing in life, even the unfaithfulness of the other, can end true love in the soul. God designed the love between the two to be as certain and unending as His own love for us, His Church.

7. When this love is unrequited for some reason, possibly an absence, a strange illness occurs for which his love is the only cure.

   "Stay me with flagons. Comfort me with apples because I am sick [literally] with love" (Song of Solomon 2:5).

   The Shulamite woman is love-sick with unrequited love for her absent shepherd lover. Flagons and apples represent attempts to assuage her sickness of soul. These attempts fail, but her sickness miraculously vanishes the moment her true love returns to her.
8. You have absolute confidence in your right man/right woman.

   I am my beloved's, and his desire is toward me (Song of Solomon 7:10).

   If your soul knows this to be true, you have found your soul mate, the one God designed to be one flesh with you.

Chapter Nine

After You've Found the Person God Has for You

So you followed God's mandates, waited for your right person, and God brought them to you. And the longer you know them, the more your love grows. Now you must determine the right time to marry. Use the following self-examination as the first step in making that decision.

A Self-Examination for Both the Man & the Woman

1. Spiritual Compatibility
   a. Do you have a mutual understanding of salvation?
   b. Do you agree on what constitutes the spiritual life?
   c. Do you have a general compatibility about learning biblical truth?
   d. Do you agree on which church to attend or which Bible teachers to listen to?
   e. Do you agree on how often you should study God's Word?
2. Soul Compatibility
   a. Do you have the same priorities in life?
   b. Do you have the same norms and standards?
   c. Do you both have a relaxed mental attitude?
   d. Are you both guided by thinking instead of emotions?
3. Physical Compatibility
   a. Have you had premarital sex with each other or anyone else? If you have in the past and have acknowledged the sin to God, you have been forgiven, and the marriage plan may proceed. If there are further repercussions, you need to be prepared to work through them.
   b. Are you physically compatible?
4. Economic compatibility
   a. Are you willing to combine all your resources into one? (You should. What belongs to your husband is yours. What belongs to you is his. That is true rapport.)

b. Do you both agree about the wife working or not?

5. Family Compatibility
   a. Do you agree about having children?
   b. Do you agree about the number of children to have?
   c. Do you agree about when to have children?
   d. Do you agree about child rearing?
   e. Do you agree about whether the wife should continue working or stay home with the children?
6. Stability
   a. Does either of you have a dependence on alcohol, drugs, or gambling?
   b. Does either of you have a neurotic personality? (If yes, have you sought medical help?)
   c. Are both of you willing to place marriage above parents and family?
   d. Is either enamored with self or dependent on the admiration of others?

These questions are the basic ones to consider and discuss before contemplating marriage. If you can't answer them appropriately, don't despair of marrying. Instead, intensify your Bible study together. All problems, even the seemingly impossible, can be surmounted through God's Word in your souls. Without this, small problems before marriage will fester and explode after marriage, making any relationship difficult to sustain. Personal standards that might become an issue in marriage should be resolved during this period. Those standards will change for the better as you grow together in the Lord, but don't marry until they have been resolved completely.

Grow together spiritually for a while and take the test again. You will be surprised and pleased at the effect of Bible doctrine on your life as individuals and as a couple. The thinking of the world will have been replaced by the Word of God. The length of time you must wait before marrying depends on the amount of worldly thinking already imbedded in your souls. Remember, too, that worldly thinking will seep right back into your souls if you stop growing by continually renewing your mind through Bible study. Your spiritual life never stays the same; you are either advancing in it or retreating.

Biblical View of Dating & Courtship

Dating: What is it?

The definition of dating is not straightforward. It's very complicated, varying from culture to culture. It means different things to different people. One defines it as "a stage of romantic relationships in which two individuals engage in activities together."[16] Another defines it as an "actively pursuing or courting someone with the intention of being together."[17] These dual definitions reveal a double edge — pursuit and romance. Where is God in the picture of pursuit and romance? It seems to contradict everything we have said so far, about God being the One, who provides our right mate at the right time, and for us to be patiently waiting on Him. "Wait on the LORD. . . wait, I say, on the LORD" (Psalm 27:14).

Dating creates a cozy environment, which so often leads to romance and sexual involvement. Make no mistake: Satan actively "roars like a lion seeking whom to devour" (1 Peter 5:8). He constantly looks for a crack in our lives. His aim is to get us into trouble with God. "Do not give the devil an opportunity" (Ephesians 4:26).

Bible or culture? We live in a time when culture seems to dictate the norms and standards rather than Scripture. As the unchangeable changer, God's "Word is settled in heaven" (Psalm 119:89). No culture can change it. We need to edge the truth in our souls.

Dating is a cultural issue. The question a believer needs to ask is this: Why should I date? Be honest in your answer. Are you dating because you are trying each other out to see if you have compatibility? Keep in mind, marriage is not like a shopping mall, where you go and try clothes on before buying them. Who is the match maker — you or God? Are you searching for the right person, or would God in His wisdom bring the right person to you? These questions you must honestly answer. If you start your marriage pursuit in the wrong way, you will end up in a wrong marriage relationship.

Are you dating because you need the company of a member of the opposite sex? If so, why is that? Are you feeling lonely? Is there

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[16] Wikipedia (accessed Thursday, August 11, 2022) https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dating

[17] Penn, Charli "What Does 'Dating' Actually Mean? We Asked 6 Staffers and Got 6 Different Answers" Essence.com (accessed Thursday, August 11, 2022) https://www.essence.com/love/relationships/what-does-dating-actually-mean-we-asked-six-staffers-and-got-six-different-answers/

any vacuum in your life that you are looking for someone to fill? A sound spiritual life can solve the problem of loneliness and can fill any vacuum in our souls. Often people, especially teenagers, have hidden or suppressed burning desire and passion within that drive them to look for some quick fixes. Under the guise of dating they enter a relationship that in most cases ends up in illicit sexual relationships, dissatisfaction, guilt and depression. This is wrong and biblically condemned.

Origin of Dating

Historically, "dating as a social practice is relatively recent phenomenon, emerging only within the last few centuries."[18] Keep the phrase "recent phenomenon" in mind. In fact, "the word 'dating' entered the American language during the 1920s."[19] Around that time its meaning changed from part of courtship to include a more informal use referring to a romantic sexual relationship where we find ourselves today. Dating has no connotation to the Bible. This explains why the idea was foreign in a Judeo-Christian America in prior centuries. The Bible played an enormous role in American culture, norms and standards until in the 1920s or so, liberal theology[20] invaded America and gradually eroded the culture that was biblically based. This coupled with the advent of the automobile and the new culture of dating[21] was born.

I had a cultural shock when I came to America. On the first day of the class, the professor asked us to write an essay on our blind date experience. I sat frozen. I thought to myself that the professor had lost his mind. "Blind date?" I asked myself, "How can a date (a fruit) be blind?" Hilarious. He later explained to me what "blind date" meant.

The Effect of Dating

Many teenagers suffer heartbreak and depression associated with what I call "dating breakups." Some end up committing suicide.

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[18] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dating, (accessed Thursday, August 4, 2022)

[19] Ibid

[20] A theology of anything goes, even if it contradicts biblical establishments. A belief that Bible has no moral authority and governance in life. This system successfully advocated a public free Bible, such as schools and governmental sectors and more.

[21] https://teachingwiththemes.com/index.php/manners-etiquette-more-resources/dating-automobiles/ (accessed August 30, 2022

Breakups are believed to be the No. 1 cause of suicides among young people.[22] Other adverse symptoms include sleeplessness, substance use, self-harm and intrusive thoughts.[23] No one should have to go through this. Rather, the Christian should fill the vacuum within, by constantly exposing himself or herself to sound Bible teaching and its application and a lifestyle of prayer.

Deception in Dating

Dating can be delusional and deceiving. It can lead to marrying the wrong mate. You ask, "How can that be?" People often think that staying with a person and getting to know the individual for a long time is the best way to test how things might go in marriage. That's not always the case. I know of an instance where a couple dated for about seven years and decided to live together. After living together for three years, they married. Their marriage ended in divorce in less than a year. Having known each other, they were convinced that they were right for each other. Were they? You probably know a couple or more who dated for a long time, married, and divorced in a hurry. The truth is that some people are better at hiding their dirty laundry than others. You see, after marriage, everyone is more relaxed and can now open their closet freely. Too often, what one finds in each other's closet makes the individual nauseated. How true is the adage, all that glitters is not gold. Beware. Don't be deceived.

The best advice is to do it the Lord's way. Wait on Him. Allow the divine "Match Maker" to bring you together at the right time. He can't fail. He has a track record of success. Don't set yourself up for spiritual failure by getting romantically involved when you are not ready for marriage or thinking about getting married soon.

Courtship

Courtship is a better word than dating. Although closely related, courtship is almost like two individuals, who are in preparation to cement a marriage relationship with vows. It should follow a no-sex policy until marriage is ratified by the culture in which you seek to marry. It's a platform for everyone to display what they are made of, spiritually.

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[22] Lucia O'Sullivan, "Teenage Heartbreak Can Kill" inverse.com (accessed Thursday, August 11, 2022) https://www.inverse.com/article 35834-teen-breakups-leading cause-of-suicide.
[23] ibid.

This is where the biblical example of Joseph and Mary fits. Joseph had identified Mary, but abstained from sexual intercourse with her, even though they were promised to each other (Matthew 1:18). It's safe to say that they were now regarded as a couple.

One should not enter any relationship that may lead to a romance until the individual is ready for marriage and the Match Maker brings them together in the place and time of His choosing. It is an insult to God's wisdom to say that He doesn't know how to lead us to our potential mate.

> "I will instruct you and teach you in the way which you should go; I will counsel you with my eye upon you" (Psalm 32:8).

What's more, He will cause you to move, relocate, if necessary, to be at the right place at the right time where He will bring your mate to you.

> "The Lord directs the steps of the godly" (Psalm 37:23 NLT).

Prepared for Marriage

Before you engage in a male/female relationship, you should ask yourself, "Am I ready for a marriage relationship?" If you answer is no, there's no reason to be involved in a relationship that usually leads to romance and sexual misconduct. I can't say this enough. Avoid creating an opportunity for spiritual failure. The devil is waiting for you. "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good. Abstain from all appearance of evil" (1 Thessalonians 5:21, 22 KJV).

This does not mean that you shouldn't be friends with people of the opposite sex. Not at all! Rather, you should "be wise as serpents and harmless as doves" (Matthew 10:6 NKJV). Be watchful and know when to say no. It's better to say no and be safe, than to say yes and be ruined. Be wise.

If you are ready, you should not be overly consumed about meeting the person. You should be consumed about spiritual righteousness. You should be concerned about developing your relationship with the "Match Maker." He will do that which only He can do — bring your right mate to you. He did it for Adam. He can do the same for you.

Building Relationship in Courtship

Now that you have identified the person, you may proceed in getting to know each other, which ought to be for a short period leading to an engagement. This courtship period should be a time to display your spiritual character. It should be a time to put on display your spiritual integrity in every sense of the word, including self-control in premarital sex, and in other areas. Be watchful. Exercise self-control. Enjoy each other's company in the love of Christ, the Chief Bridegroom of the church. This is God's way.

Remember, the intention of this book is to provide a sound Biblical view and counsel on marriage. It's not to condemn you where you may have failed in the past. There's no sin too great for God's pardoning grace. He will graciously forgive us. Simply acknowledge your sins to God (1 John 1:9). Put behind you past failures and press on, for what lies ahead is far greater and richer than what's behind (Philippians 4:13-15).

The Right Time to Marry

As we've already learned, marriage for mature Christians is a battleground filled with land mines. No one should enter into marriage until he is prepared for spiritual combat. Satan, as prosecuting attorney, does everything in his power to discredit any couple who executes the spiritual life together. His goal is to destroy that marriage! Satan bribes, tempts, threatens — whatever he needs to do to get a husband and/or his wife out of the spiritual life and, therefore, out of God's side in the angelic conflict.

Many years ago, Satan cross-examined both Job and his wife. Job passed with flying colors while his wife failed miserably because she was unprepared. Apparently, she lacked God's word in her soul; and if she had it, she did not utilize it to glorify God in her marriage.

> If you [on the witness stand] faint [fail] in the day of adversity [the day of testing as a witness for God], your strength is small (Proverbs 24:10).

No believer should marry when his spiritual strength is weak. He should wait until he is ready to face the challenge of Satan's cross-examination. Christian marriages fall apart every day because

husband and wife aren't prepared for Satan's unremitting attacks. They aren't standing shoulder to shoulder, the armor of God's Word shielding them. They aren't protecting each other's backs from assault. Instead, they are collapsing under Satan's barrage and forfeiting through misery and divorce God's greatest blessing for them on earth — a corporate testimony against Satan and his demons.

> For the word of God is constantly living and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword [Greek: *machaira*], piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart [soul] (Hebrews 4:12).

The Greek word *machaira*, translated two-edged sword in this verse, refers to the strongest weapon of the Roman Empire, a weapon which led Rome to victory after victory. God the Holy Spirit deliberately directed the author of the book of Hebrews to use this particular sword in describing the power of the Word. The people of that time knew that anything sharper than a *machaira* demanded the utmost reverence, and the Word of God is much sharper.

The Christian who uses God's Word is like a soldier who uses a two-edged sword — never off balance, always capable of defeating the enemy. The sword of the Word cuts deeply into us to benefit us, penetrating into the immaterial part, the soul, and lodging there. The Word goes in and changes attitude and life. It gives peace and tranquility. The Word should be the weapon of choice for every Christian husband and wife as they fight for victory in the battleground of marriage.

The living Word of God is the secret to life in time on earth as well as in Heaven hereafter. Even as the secret to life is found in God's Word so the secret to power is found here also. Therefore, we must believe the Word of God and appropriate into our souls the Scriptures, promises, and doctrines in order to have divine power transferred into our lives.

> All Scripture is inspired by God [God-breathed] and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; in order that the man of God may be mature, thoroughly equipped for every good work (II Timothy 3:16-17).

Study and apply the Word of God before marriage. Focus on being the right man or right woman for your spouse. Study and apply the Word of God after marriage so that together you can achieve the greatest happiness God gives on earth. Continue studying the Word of God so that together you can become a corporate testimony for God against Satan and reap the greatest rewards possible for eternity.

The Wedding Ceremony

The only legitimate vow of the Church Age, the marriage vow, is a vow for both believers and unbelievers. Through their wedding vows, every bride and groom commits to the sanctity and fulfillment of their marriage.

A wedding ceremony is a civil ceremony but provides an opportunity for the presentation of the Gospel to those attending along with a challenge to the bride and groom to make the Lord and His Word the main priority in their lives. During the ceremony, the believer bride and groom should concentrate on the words of the ceremony, God's mandates for marriage. "Love, cherish, and obey" is the vow taken by the bride. "Love, cherish, and protect" is the vow taken by the groom. "For better or for worse" is the commitment of both bride and groom. Marriage *will* have both better and worse. Worse is no excuse to run around trying to find something better.

"Until death do us part . . . " These words put an ending time on that marriage: the death of one spouse. Only death can end marriage legitimately.

Today, too much emphasis is placed on the extravagance of the wedding ceremony and too little on the permanence of the commitment being made. The following are some suggestions that will help make your wedding ceremony God-centered.

- The father gives the bride away, not the father and the mother, because he is the authority head in the family. In the absence of a father or a close male relative, the mother or an aunt may give the bride away.
- Never compete with others to have the biggest or the "best" wedding. Don't invite more guests than you can afford. Count the costs. If you only have money for wine and bread, serve them to your guests joyfully.

- Avoid approbation lust, the desire to receive praise for the outward appearance of your wedding. A wedding does not have to be elaborate to be God honoring.
- Don't over-spend. I know people who have delayed getting married simply because they had not saved enough money for an extravagant wedding. They have the mythical idea that a big wedding will effect their marriage for the better. The only impact a big wedding can have is on your wallet! Some people spend so much in their wedding ceremony that they become broke.
- A small ceremony with just a few family and friends can be just as God honoring as a large ceremony — Glorification of God should be the center of your marriage.

Chapter Ten

Sex & Marriage

Two categories of sex are operational today: Legitimate sex, which God invented for marriage, and illegitimate sex, which is man's sinful and evil distortion of that which God so graciously provides.

To succeed in marriage, you need to understand one principle above all others: Sex outside of marriage is always wrong. Always. No exception. Sex outside marriage always brings severe divine discipline. Always. No exception. The Bible does not mince words on its consequences.

> "The one who commits adultery with a woman is lacking sense; he who will destroy himself does it. Wounds and disgrace he will find, and his reproach will not be blotted out" (Proverbs 6:32-33).

Sexual sins are unique in that they attack both the body and soul. The desire for sex is genetic, but the function of sex is volitional. You have a drive for sexual expression, not a need. You can choose not to succumb to the temptation of your sex drive. You should so choose.

In order for sex to survive the perversion of the Fall, God gave us rules and boundaries for it. The Old Sin Nature is constantly trying to circumvent these in order to degrade and destroy that which God has made so wonderful. Satan desperately wants to undermine family and marriage so that the angelic conflict will be over and he will have won. Tolerance of fornication and sexual degeneracy is a subtle way Satan promotes his agenda and convinces us to abandon God's plan.

Let me emphasize further that normal sexual desire in marriage is not only not a sin but also God's plan for both husband and wife. God Himself invented sex, but for marriage only. Discovery of each other's bodies is part of the excitement of marriage; therefore, keep yourself a virgin until you marry.

Sex is not love. Sex is a manifestation of love in marriage, the body language of love between spouses. Sex expresses the intimacy, love, affection, virtue, and happiness of marriage. Sex also portrays the beauty of the interdependence of the man and the woman in marriage. Sex outside of marriage is lust, not love.

God ordained marriage to be a special and unique relationship, a system of intimacy and privacy, The foundation is the Lord Jesus Christ, who performed the first marriage and gave instructions in person regarding it. Since the Lord Jesus Christ is no longer doing either personally, He has designed and designated His written Word as His substitute. Now, in the Church Age, the Bible is God's foundation for Christian marriage;

The key to a successful sex life is virtue. That's right — virtue. God invented sex to function magnificently to the satisfaction of both husband and wife through virtue. Just as personal love is virtue-dependent, so sex is virtue-dependent for its effectiveness. To be satisfying, sex demands virtue, tenderness, sensitivity, understanding, thoughtfulness, and tolerance. Personal love undergirded by virtue love and spiritual self-esteem on the part of both husband and wife make sex fantastic, truly a vacation in the Garden of Eden.

Sex & Adam & Eve

In order to understand sex in the Church Age, we need to understand the origin of sex in the Garden of Eden. Adam and Eve went through three stages in their marriage:

1. The Perfection Stage: Sex in this stage was for recreation alone, an expression of attraction love. Conception was not mentioned until Genesis 4, after the fall.
2. The Spiritual Death Stage: After the fall, sex in this stage involved both recreation purely for enjoyment and procreation for the perpetuation of the human race.
3. The Regenerate Stage: After Adam and Eve were born again, sex became an expression of attraction, compatibility, and rapport love in marriage. Sex remained primarily for recreation.

We can never go back to the Perfection Stage of sex because we now have an Old Sin Natures. Married unbelievers experience a time with the potential of great happiness but without the true

happiness available only to members of God's Royal Family. Mature married believers enjoy the Regenerate Stage, during which sex is an expression of maximum love for each other.

Premarital Sex

People often ask, "What is the difference between adultery and fornication?" Fornication is voluntary sexual intercourse between two unmarried persons. Adultery is voluntary sexual intercourse with someone other than your spouse. Both fornication and adultery mean accepting a substitute sex partner in order to gratify a biological or emotional urge. We will deal with adultery later in this study; now we will concentrate on fornication, also known as premarital sex.

Many believers have failed in the area of fornication. Peer pressure seems to be the cause, especially among teenagers — thinking "others are doing it; why be different." The consequences of premarital sex or fornication are horrific. The Bible warns that its "reproach will not be blotted out" (Proverbs 6:33). God forbids it because He has our future happiness in mind. Premarital virginity doesn't necessarily ensure post-marital happiness, but premarital sex does ensure premarital and post-marital problems.

> It is God's will that you should be sanctified: That you should avoid sexual immorality, that each of you should learn to control his own body in a way that is holy and honorable (I Thessalonians 4:3-4).

Following are some principles to keep in mind as we study the damage caused by premarital sex:

1. Premarital sex is always for the purpose of gratifying personal desires and never includes genuine love or a sense of responsibility. The object of premarital desire is simply an instrument to satisfy lusts.
2. Both men and women enter into premarital sex for one reason only: to satisfy their libido or sex urge. Self-absorption, which is a facet of arrogance, is their main emotion and causes them to be hyper-sensitive about self and insensitive about others. A self-absorbed person only has room in his heart for himself. He is a user and, therefore, only nice to you as long as you are satisfying the user's needs.

3. A man who assumes he is irresistible to women is dangerous to women. Excessive self-love destroys the capacity to love in both male and female.
4. Women who engage in sex outside of marriage are just as guilty as men. They chose to do it of their own free will. The only exception is rape. A woman who has been forced to have sex against her will has not committed fornication. She has had a criminal act perpetrated on her. Her body was involved, not her soul. In God's eyes she remains a virgin, waiting for her right man. Understanding God's view keeps her from feeling guilt or shame. The man (or woman) who commits rape is the one who commits a sin and should be punished severely.
5. Anyone who has sex outside of marriage has put himself above the law of God.
6. Premarital sex doesn't prepare a person for marriage but instead destroys the virtue and compatibility necessary for success in marriage. Experience doesn't make a good lover. Virtue does.
7. Fornication has no virtue, and virtue is essential for a successful marriage.
8. Premarital sex traps believers in emotion, rather than in virtuous thinking. Emotion is irrational and has zero strength or endurance. Because emotion attacks the soul, any sex outside of marriage is devastating to the soul, causing scar tissue.
9. Continued fornication builds layer upon layer of scar tissue and suffocates any possibility of true love, even with your right spouse.
10. Unrestrained sexual activity doesn't lead to freedom, but to the bondage of scar tissue.
11. Prolonged premarital sex eliminates any chance of being the right person for anyone so that the search for right man or right woman is frustrated with psychological and sexual hang-ups and regrets.
12. A man who doesn't respect a woman is not the man for her. A man who possesses a woman's body without her soul has nothing.
13. A male with virtue never takes advantage of a situation or presses a woman to engage in sexual intimacy.
14. When a man truly loves a woman, he doesn't try to have sex with her outside of marriage.

15. Premarital chastity produces self-control, which makes a husband an effective lover of his wife.
16. Fornication not only brings severe punishment from God but also creates handicaps both in body and soul for any future marriage.
17. God gives everyone a well of sexual energy from which to draw. No one can replace energy in that well. Fornication is a sin against the body and depletes the sexual energy necessary for marriage.
18. The body is damaged in fornication in the sense that God's formatted sexual rhythms and timing are thrown out of whack through improper use with others.
19. Promiscuity confuses the rhythms of many partners and, therefore, makes concentration on one spouse difficult if not impossible.
20. The more premarital sex partners a believer has, the more difficulty he will have adjusting to one partner in marriage.
21. Boredom in marriage is a frequent consequence of premarital sex.
22. Because sexual needs can't be satisfied by anyone other than your right person in the status of marriage, frustration is always a result of premarital sex.
23. Physically, fornication can cause impotence, frigidity, or nymphomania either before or after marriage.
24. Fornication steals from a right man or right woman that which he deserves. A woman's first sexual partner gets the feelings that God reserved for her husband. Equally, a man who has sex outside marriage forfeits his right woman's first experience with him.
25. When a man has sex with anyone but his right woman, he is giving that which belongs to her to others. "Do not give your strength to women" (Proverbs 31:3). He is also depriving his right woman of her response.
26. Promiscuity leads to inevitable comparisons with other partners and to inevitable, if not always spoken, questions about a spouse's previous sexual experiences.
27. The habitual Christian fornicator is the habitual Christian loser.
28. Abstinence is the only divinely mandated premarital birth control method and should be taught by parents to their children along with every other biblical view of marriage. Other birth control

methods are acceptable after marriage since sex in marriage is first and foremost for the enjoyment of husband and wife.
29. Purity is essential until marriage.
30. Once lost, virginity can't be reclaimed.
31. Solutions exist for those who have already committed the sin of sex outside of marriage:

    - For the unbeliever, salvation and God's immediate forgiveness of all pre-salvation sins.
    - For the believer, confession (acknowledge sins to God), study and apply God's Word. That is the spiritual life.

Many people who engage in fornication say, "Sex is fun!" They argue that nothing that feels so good can really be wrong. Sure, illicit sex may be fun for the moment, but you are playing with fire, and the consequences can damage your entire life. God is protecting you when He commands you to,

> flee fornication. All other sins a man commits are outside the body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body. Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own. You were bought at a price. Therefore, honor God with your body (I Corinthians 6:18-20).

God loves you with an immeasurable love because as a believer, you are His child. Like every good parent, He wants only the best for you. Why then does He forbid you from having what so many people consider fun? First, when you believe in Christ as your Savior, your body becomes a home for the indwelling of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. God doesn't want His home corrupted by premarital sex. Secondly, lasting happiness through sexual intercourse can come only through the union of two souls, not just two bodies.

> For this cause [or reason] a man shall leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave [Hebrew: *Dabaq* : firmly joined together in sexual intercourse] to his wife; and they shall become as one flesh (Genesis 2:24).

God is not saying that in sexual intercourse a husband and wife literally become one visible flesh. Instead, because of their personal love for each other, their soul interaction when they engage in sex makes them as one. In divine mathematics, one plus one equals one! God truly makes the impossible reality.

When a believer commits any sin other than the sin of fornication, the memory of that sin eventually fades because only one soul was involved: his. However, the sin of fornication is remembered for a lifetime because someone else's soul made a permanent mark (scar tissue) on your soul. The more you commit fornication, the more scar tissue you accumulate. The more scar tissue you accumulate, the less space you have for the enjoyment of sexual intercourse with your right partner when you marry. Now you can begin to fathom the apostle Peter's warning,

> Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain [Greek: *apechomai*: to keep oneself from, to refrain] from fleshly lusts [Greek: *epithumia*: an active and individual desire resulting from a diseased condition of the soul], which wage war against the soul (I Peter 2:11).

As a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, any time you commit fornication, you harm your soul. Even though you name the sin of fornication to God by using I John 1:9 and even though He forgives you immediately (He always forgives our sins the moment we acknowledge them), that sin will scar you for the rest of your life and may even interfere with your future relationship with your right person. The cumulative distortion of the soul through fornication explains in part the inability of so many married believers and unbelievers to enjoy sex with their spouses. They've lost that capacity through scar tissue on their souls. God tells us that believers in perpetual carnality,

> Being past feeling [having become callused with scar tissue], have given themselves [betrayed themselves] over to lasciviousness [any sex outside of marriage], to make a profession of all uncleanness [mental and overt impurity] with greediness [in insatiable lust or a frantic search for happiness] (Ephesians 4:19).

The carnal believer exhibits two betrayals: First, the continuous inner betrayal of mental attitude sins such as bitterness, arrogance, and mental adultery; second, the overt betrayal of visible sins such as fornication and adultery, which illustrate the inner betrayals. The only solution to both betrayals is to confess immediately! Acknowledge your sins to God and move on in the spiritual life. Restoration to fellowship with God is possible through grace. Grace always works, and grace allows us to look to the future with hope.

Satan is a genius, subtle and clever, and he knows the perfect way to make your life miserable if you give him the opportunity. He will try to distract your fellowship with God by putting temptation in your path. Satan is a genius, but God, the Author of ingenuity, has provided every believer with a wall of fire in the form of biblical truth and promises to protect him from the temptations of Satan. God in the Bible unequivocally warns us:

> not [to] give the devil a foothold [one-millionth inch of space in your soul] (Ephesians 4:27).

Some believers think they have fooled Satan by abstaining physically from intercourse with the object of their lust and instead mentally imagining sexual intercourse. They have rationalized to themselves that sexual intercourse must involve physical contact. On the contrary, Jesus Christ said,

> "You have heard that it was said in old times [Exodus 20:14], 'Do not commit adultery.' But [in addition to that] I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his mind" (Matthew 5:27-28).

Adultery and fornication are not simply overt acts but mental attitudes. Mental adultery and fornication are as sinful and damaging to your soul as physical adultery and fornication. Any thoughts of a sexual nature should be reserved for your spouse alone. You should kick out any wrong thought that enters your mind. Capture and expel it! You don't have to entertain a thought just because it comes into your mind.

Some believers rationalize their fornication by saying, "Well, I'm having sex only with my girlfriend. We're getting married anyway. What's the big deal?!" Such words prove that Satan has succeeded in

selling them his ideas or what the apostle Paul called "the doctrine of demons" (I Timothy 4:1). Such a believer has bought Satan's lie because he likes the lie. He wants to gratify his sex lust so he eagerly believes Satan's arguments. He deceives himself into believing that any alternative to the lie isn't *reasonable* and, therefore, doesn't need to be followed. The truth is that God regards everyone as unmarried until the marriage ceremony is performed. Any sexual intercourse that occurs prior to marriage has lasting negative consequences, even when those fornicating are right for each other..

Avoid irrational thinking. Some believers convince themselves that they are satisfying a natural curiosity when they have sex outside marriage. Others rationalize that something that feels so good can't be wrong. The rationalizations go on and on. If these thoughts from Satan ever enter your mind, remember Eve. Just one bite from the forbidden fruit cost her dearly. She reaped the consequences for the rest of her life, and we continue to suffer because of that one violation of God's mandate. "A woman is dead while she lives through wanton living" (I Timothy 5:6).

A woman who has sex outside of marriage has betrayed herself and her Savior Jesus Christ. Her soul suffocates from the scar tissue acquired through her promiscuity. The same is true for a man.

Listen to God as He warns you to abstain from fornication (Acts 15:20), to resist polluting your soul with the sin of fornication (Matthew 15:18), and to avoid the company of those who live a lifestyle of fornication (I Corinthians 5:9, 10, 6:9). Listen to Him and believe His Word.

But what if you have already committed the sin of fornication? The solution for fornication is the same as for all sins. We are to acknowledge our sins privately to God (I John 1:9). We are to do what our Lord Jesus Christ told the woman who was caught in an act of adultry: "Go your way. From now on sin no more" (John 8:11b).

Don't let the sin of guilt overpower you. Instead, let the words of the apostle Paul echo through the corridors of your soul:

> Forgetting what lies behind [both successes and failures] and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward calling in Christ Jesus (Philippians 3:14).

Forget the past. Confession allows you to once again walk in the light and live a spiritual lifestyle that glorifies God. You will reap the consequences of your actions, but when you are in fellowship with God through the filling of the Holy Spirit, God turns those consequences from cursing into blessing.

Before concluding this section, let's state clearly God's will concerning you.

> For this is God's will: Your sanctification [advancing through Bible doctrine], that you abstain from sexual immorality, that each of you should learn to possess his own vessel [his wife] in honor and give careful regard to her, not in passionate lust like the heathen [unbelievers], who do not know God; and that in this matter no one should wrong his brother or take advantage of him. The Lord will punish men [every believer] for all such sins, as we have already told you and warned you. For God did not call us to be impure but to live a life set apart to Him. Therefore, he who rejects Bible teaching does not reject man [the author of this book and/or the pastor-teacher of the congregation] but God, who gives you His Holy Spirit (I Thessalonians 4:3-8).

You have only two options with regard to fornication. In the first option, you choose the so-called fun of sex outside marriage, and by succumbing to this pseudo-fun, you damage true happiness with the one person God designed specifically to bring maximum happiness to you. In this option, you also flirt with the possibility of permanently scarring your soul and interfering with your fellowship with the One who has always loved you so very much.

In the second option, you postpone sexual intercourse until you can enjoy a legitimate sexual relationship with your spouse, thereby having the potential for great rapport with God in time and in the eternal state yet to come.

Consider carefully the consequences of ignoring God's mandates. Is any momentary pleasure worth damaging your relationship with both God and your future spouse? Remember, too, that any pleasure in fornication is fleeting but the damage is definite, and irrevocable. We know this is true because God tells us so in His Word. God never lies. This does not mean that the sin of fornication is not forgivable.

All sins are forgivable upon confession (1 John 1:9). The stain and ramification can go on and on as evidenced in the life of David which we will examine later in this chapter.

The Shotgun Marriage

When individuals engage in premarital sex, pregnancy is always a possibility. If pregnancy does occur, a decision to marry or not marry must then be made. Some parents make the mistake of forcing their child to marry, in essence holding a shotgun to the man's head to make him walk that wedding aisle.

Certainly, it is true that each of us must take responsibility for our actions, but premarital sex by its very nature of selfish self-absorption indicates that the parties in this sex act are immature and incapable of sustaining the loving relationship necessary for marriage. Without confession and maintaining your spiritual life, they have little hope of sustaining a marriage. The child who is the outcome of their lust has little chance of having a stable, nurturing home life.

The answer is not in forced marriage. Neither is it ideal to subject a child to a one-parent family. Marriage *may* be the answer but only if both parties confess their sin and make it their priority to learning and applying Bible truth to their lives.

The real solution is no premarital sex. Period. For any reason. Even the night before the ceremony. Ever. Purity lost can't be reclaimed.

God's Gift of Sex in Marriage

God gave Adam and Eve two wedding gifts: Perfect environment and perfect sex. And yet Adam and Eve failed! The success of Christian marriage is not in perfect environment or perfect sex, but rather in the execution of the spiritual life. Therefore, in addition to perfect environment and perfect sex, God gave Adam and Eve divine instruction so that they could have true love. God designed sex to be an expression of that true love. Sex is the best vacation in any marriage because for that period of time the world recedes while the joy of the Garden of Eden is regained.

Marriage has three areas of intimacy:

1. Soul intimacy: Soul rapport through the formation of integrity, the basis for true love.
2. Spiritual intimacy: The union of the spiritual lives of husband and wife, by which they utilize the filling of the Holy Spirit and the knowledge and application of Bible doctrine to attain a personal sense of destiny, spiritual maturity, occupation with Christ, and glorification of God.
3. Physical intimacy: The sexual coalescence of bodies in sexual foreplay and intercourse. Sex is the ultimate in human intimacy, an invisible wall that isolates husband and wife from the rest of the world.

Soul rapport must come before the union of bodies in sex; therefore, the soul relationship must be properly developed before marriage and before sex. A marriage that doesn't have the foundation of a soul relationship will be hard to sustain. That is why I emphasized earlier not to marry before reaching the compatibility stage of love.

One of God's first mandates in the Garden of Eden was that husband and wife leave their parents and have sex (cleave) with each other — and this was before any parents existed! From the very beginning, sex consummated marriage. God designed sex to be a binding force in marriage and one of life's greatest blessings. Sex in marriage serves two legitimate functions, the fulfillment of normal sexual desires and as an expression of true love and soul rapport.

Christian Marriage

To those of us living in the Church Age, God reveals mysteries unknown in Old Testament times, including the added significance of Christian marriage. The sexual coalescence of bodies in Christian marriage is analogous to the union of Christ and the Church. Read that statement again and allow the immensity of the grace of God to sink into your soul. Feast your mind on the power, blessing, and impact God intends you to have in your marriage. Feast and rejoice!

There is only one Savior, and every believer is in union with that One and only Savior. The right Savior is the Lord Jesus Christ, and the right body for that Savior is the believer. A right man shouldn't go to a wrong woman any more than he should worship someone other than Jesus Christ.

> Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take away the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? May it never be! (1 Corinthians 6:15).

Because the union of Christ and the Church is sacred, marriage is sacred. Because the union of Christ and the Church is a mandated fusion of bodies, sex is mandated for marriage. The union of Christ and the Church has the greatest impact on the Church Age, on the glorification of God, on giving the highest and the best to this generation, and on receiving the highest and the best blessings. All of this is possible in Christian marriage as well!

God expects every husband to give his body unreservedly to his wife just as Christ gave His body on the Cross. Jesus Christ gave His body willingly because of love. A husband is commanded to love his wife with this same love. Christ gave His love (*agapao*) to the Church only; therefore, a husband gives his ultimate love, including its expression in sex, to his wife only. A husband who understands Bible doctrine understands his wife; therefore, he can control and resist his lusts and desires, even those of his thoughts.

God designed the male and female bodies for the fulfillment of a sexual relationship. The body of one spouse rightly belongs to the other and only to him. Neither the man nor the woman is designed to satisfy himself in sex. Each needs the other. A man becomes complete because the woman completes him. The woman perfectly complements her man. She is made for her one man, and she is never complete without him. When the two are united in marriage, they have the potential for the greatest blessings in the world because God's design is perfect.

Neither husband nor wife has superiority in sex. A husband has the right over his wife's body, and the wife has control over her husband's body; however, each should be considerate of the other, receiving maximum enjoyment from fulfilling the other.

> Let the husband fulfill his marital duty to his wife and likewise also the wife to her husband. The wife does not have the power to arouse her own body [masturbation is wrong], but the husband does [can bring out the physical response of his wife]; and likewise also the husband does not have the power of his own body, but the wife does (I Corinthians 7:3-4).

"Fulfill his marital duty" means that a husband gives from the ultimate source of himself. From his mind, he gives a mental attitude called love that expresses itself in conversation and actions as well as in sex. He is thoughtful, considerate, sensitive, and tender in every relationship with his wife, including sex.

The man's authority over his wife is set aside in sex. The woman's obedience to her husband is also set aside. In sex, each has something the other needs for completion, and thus neither is the authority. The wife has just as much right to initiate sex as her husband. Instead of authority, sex brings with it flexibility of response and counter-response, which begins in foreplay and continues into intercourse; therefore, sex becomes a vacation, a change from the usual system of initiation by the husband and response by the wife.

Sex is for the pleasure of both husband and wife. Many husbands forget to satisfy their wives, which is lust, and as a result sex becomes a terrible burden to the wife, who comes to hate the very thing that God designed for her blessing. Self-gratification has no part as a motivation for sex although sex under God's rules provides unspeakable gratification. Virtue demands that a husband make sure that his wife is satisfied in her responses in sex. He fails to love her as Christ loved the Church when he fails to control his own body in sex. Because of God's anatomical design of the male and female, the husband is the one who must have self-control. He must use his virtue authority to keep his body under control for as long as necessary to satisfy his wife. He can only please himself in the full sense by fulfilling her. Since the body of a woman becomes the body of her right man, her body really belongs to him. He is the custodian of both her body and her soul, of her body in sex and of her soul in fellowship. His mind is filled with his wife to the exclusion of all others. His goal is to bring her happiness in all things.

The physical love of both husband and wife is intensive and protective as well as responsive and receptive. Each tries to give the other all the passion and tenderness that they possess, with the other responding to it and returning it. Marriage is a constant series of responses and counter-responses so that this interplay inevitably becomes part of the expression of something wonderful and meaningful rather than a mere animal activity.

A husband shouldn't demand that which goes against his wife's spiritual standards. She obeys God first. However, any sexual activity

that is acceptable to both husband and wife and is not divinely prohibited in God's Word (e.g., masturbation) is also acceptable to God.

Sex in marriage emphasizes the doctrinal principle that each spouse has a responsibility to the other. Because sex is virtue-dependent, it continually gets better as both spouses advance in the spiritual life.

> Adam and his wife were both naked, the man and his wife, and they were not ashamed [confused or disappointed] (Genesis 2:25).

Because their love resides in their souls, a husband and wife enjoy intimacy without shame. Just as Adam and Eve were comfortable in their nakedness, so a husband and wife shouldn't have any hang-ups about their physical relationship.

Since God has so ordained the man and woman for each other, neither husband nor wife has the right to say no to sex, nor can they demand something that the other is uncomfortable doing.

> Stop defrauding one another [by denying sex to your spouse] except it be with mutual consent for a time for the purpose that you may give yourselves to fasting [not from food but from the normal use of your time] and prayer. Then come together again so that Satan does not tempt you with lack of self-control (I Corinthians 7:5).

Satan likes to separate spouses so that he can intrude with temptations; therefore, separations, if necessary, should be brief. Preferably, no separation should occur. If you are separated because of marital problems, reconcile immediately because marriage isn't about you; it's about the body of Christ and a corporate testimony. You were committed by God with the trust to make your marriage work. Come back together — sexually, too.

Where there is to be a departure from each other's company for a period of spiritual refreshment, both spouses must agree to the separation. The true concept of fasting is setting aside time ordinarily devoted to any normal, legitimate pursuit in life — not just eating — for Bible study and prayer. If this mutually agreed

upon time of abstinence is extended too long, the pressure of Satan may eventually break down the self-control necessary to keep the marriage relationship above an animal instinct. Don't allow Satan to fool you into thinking that abstinence from sex is spirituality.

Adultery

Adultery means having sex with someone other than your spouse. Adultery is stealing someone else's spouse! The effects of adultery both on marriage and the spiritual life are devastating.

Adultery is a form of desertion and as such is grounds for divorce; however, having your spouse commit adultery doesn't require you to divorce. You can choose to stay in your marriage, using virtue love toward your spouse and trust toward God to make the situation right. Your commitment to the divine institution of marriage depends on the integrity of your soul, not on the behavior of anyone else. Marriage is meant by God to be until the death of one's spouse.

In the Old Testament, adultery was considered such a heinous sin that it was punishable by death.

> If there is a man who commits adultery with another man's wife, one who commits adultery with his friend's wife, the adulterer [man] and the adulteress [woman] shall surely be put to death (Leviticus 20:10).

The consequences of adultery are so devastating that in the Church Age God allows adultery to be grounds for divorce should the victim of the adultery so choose (Matthew 5:32). Why does God take the sin of adultery so seriously? Mark recorded the words of our Lord:

> And the two will become as one flesh. So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore, what God has joined together, let no man separate (Mark 10:8-9).

The intrusion into another person's marriage through adultery is one way of dividing what God has joined together.

Anyone who engages in adultery wounds their own soul. When the Lord commanded us not to commit adultery (Exodus 12:14),

He had the protection of our souls in mind! This does not mean that the person who involves himself in this betrayal of adultery has committed an unpardonable sin. A believer cannot commit an unpardonable sin; only an unbeliever can, the sin of unbelief. A believer can confess the sin of adultery, and God will forgive him, but the repercussions remain monstrous!

The quickest way to bring a marriage to a screeching halt is to commit adultery. A wife hasn't the power or right to transfer her love and respect to someone else even if her husband doesn't give her love. A husband doesn't have the power or right to transfer his love to someone else even if his wife flirts with others or shows him no respect.

A woman can be allured by flattery out from the protective authority of her husband, or she can abandon his authority by being a flirt, feeding her own arrogance and need for praise. Both are wrong. Jesus Christ created the woman to be a responder to one man only. Problems arise when a wife responds to anyone other than her husband; therefore, she must understand that a seemingly innocent flirtation isn't innocent at all but wrong and can ultimately lead to adultery, mental or otherwise. It is the husband's responsibility to protect his wife in all ways, including from any outside encroachment in the form of seduction, distraction, or transference of affection and admiration to someone else.

On the other hand, a woman doesn't have security in life except through the faithfulness of her right man. He must be faithful to her even in his thoughts. Temptation is Satan's great persuader. It is not sinful or wrong to be tempted. It *is* sinful and wrong to give in to that temptation, either in mental fantasy or actual deed. Obedience because of your love for God must be more important than the temptation. A believer can't sin and simultaneously have respect for God.

God's Word in the soul serves as an insulator against the temptation to commit adultery. For the husband, the inner beauty of a virtuous wife serves as a second insulator to protect him from other women. The ultimate insulator, of course, is the surpassing love that each believer should have for his eternal Father, a love that takes precedence over failing God by becoming involved in adultery.

Believers who have the tranquility of soul obtained through knowledge of Bible truth are not the slaves of men. They realize that they were saved in order to execute the will of God, not the lusts of men. Because of tranquility in their souls, they aren't vulnerable

to peer pressure. They don't give into the temptation to commit adultery because their love for God and for their spouse is greater.

Many people who have succumbed to the sin of adultery have done so through betraying friends. It is not surprising that the Bible also takes notice (Leviticus 20:10). Christian husbands should be extremely careful in their interaction with their friends' wives. The danger of committing adultery exists, and husbands ought not to be taken by a storm of lust because they failed to use caution.

When a husband or wife join with someone else in a sexual relationship, the third soul will inevitably interfere with the union and pleasure which God designed for the husband and his wife. That explains in part why many married couples express dissatisfaction when they engage in sexual intercourse with their spouses. Through adultery, they have destroyed soul rapport with their spouse, thereby making physical rapport impossible.

> Drink water from your own cistern [your own right woman] and fresh water from your own well [marriage]. Should your waters be spread abroad, streams of water in the streets? [In other words, should you enter into promiscuity?] Let them be yours alone [your right woman's alone] and not for strangers with you. Let your fountains [your capacity for marriage] be blessed. Rejoice with the wife of your youth . . . Be intoxicated always with *her* love. For why should you, my son, be exhilarated with an adulterous woman and embrace the bosom of a foreigner? For the ways of a man are before the Lord, and He watches all your paths [your mental attitudes]. His own iniquities [self-induced misery through swings into sexual lust] will capture the wicked. He will be held by the cords of his sin. [The fornicator is held accountable for his carnality.] He will die [through the sin unto death if he doesn't confess] because of lack of instruction [knowledge of Bible doctrine]. In the greatness of his folly, he will go astray (Proverbs 5:15).

The believer who commits adultery — or fornication — is likely to develop what I call a distorted soul or soul unrest, which makes it difficult for him to enjoy sex with his spouse. He will be frustrated in life and often will suggest marital separation as a solution. This human solution is no solution. Confession and living the spiritual life are the only solutions.

Many believers do not realize the consequences of running head-on into the justice of God. They delude themselves by rationalizing that God is a gracious God, but Paul asks,

> Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? May it never be! (Romans 6:1-2)

Do not use the graciousness of God and His provision of confession as a reason to excuse your sin.

> If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness (I John 1:9).

Certainly, He has said that He will forgive us if we confess our sins to Him, and He will, but He is also a God of justice!

> Do not be deceived: God is not mocked. A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his sinful nature will reap destruction [soul-unrest] (Galatians 6:7-8a).

David & Adultery

King David of the Old Testament is a perfect example of a man who suffered severely because of his adultery. Not only did he commit adultery, he committed murder in an attempt to cover his sin. God called David "a man after God's own heart"; nonetheless, David did not escape the justice of God for his sin.

> This is what the Lord says: "Out of your own household [King David's], I am going to bring calamity upon you. Before your very eyes I will take your wives and give them to one who is close to you, and he will lie with your wives in broad daylight. You did it [committing adultery] in secret, but I will do this thing in broad daylight before all Israel." Then David said to Nathan [the prophet], [and confessed] "I have sinned against the Lord." Nathan replied, "The Lord has taken away your sin. You are not going to die [the sin unto death, which you deserve]. But because by doing this [sinful act of adultery] you have made the enemies of the Lord show utter contempt, the son born to you will die" (II Samuel 12:11-14).

In fact, God's punishment of David did not end in the death of his son with Bathsheba. Speaking as God's representative, the prophet Nathan said also,

> "Now, therefore, the sword will never depart from your house because you despised Me and took the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your own" (II Samuel 12:10).

King David suffered calamity after grievous calamity throughout his life as a result of his adultery. The author of the book of Hebrews wrote,

> It is a dreadful [or fearful] thing to fall into the hands of the living God (Hebrews 11:31).

David, indeed, suffered tremendously under the powerful justice of God. The sword — warfare — never departed from his house. If David, "a man after God's heart," was never let off the hook when he succumbed to the sin of adultery, and murder, who then do you think you are to assume that God will close His eyes to your sin?

> He who commits adultery has no sense. He who does it destroys his own soul. He will get wounds [which distort his soul and cause soul-unrest], and his disgrace will not be wiped away (Proverbs 6:32-33).

> Can a man carry fire in his bosom and his clothes not be burned? Or can one walk on hot coals and his feet not be scorched? So is he who goes into his neighbor's wife [to commit adultery with her] (Proverbs 6:27-29).

In adultery, the wrong woman gets the wrong man, and something is destroyed in her responses: Soulishly, scar tissue forms; physically, sex isn't as it should be. The adulterer suffers burns on his soul, painful and scar-producing. Thus, if you are ever tempted to commit adultery, stop and ask yourself, "Is this temporary pleasure worth remaining under the iron hand of God?" (David suffered 10 years and paid fourfold.)

Guilt is a sin blocking biblical thinking in the believer's soul, making him irrational and delusional. When King David committed

adultery, the guilt he harbored in his soul made his life a bed of misery until he acknowledged his sin to God.

> I acknowledged [confessed] my transgressions [Hebrew: *pesha*: sin; willful deviation from the path of righteousness] to You [God], and I did not hide my iniquity; I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord," and You forgave the guilt of my sin (Psalm 32:5 emphasis added).

David isolated his sins and failures and acknowledged them to God. Having regained fellowship with God, he moved on in his spiritual life, taking in the Word of God every day. Even though David continued receiving the consequences of his sins, God changed the cursing into blessing for him.

Finally, let us examine our Lord Jesus Christ's handling of the apostate Jews who sought to censure Him on the issue of adultery with regard to the Mosaic Law.

> Now the Scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman caught in the act of adultery and made her stand before the crowd. Then they said to Jesus, "Rabbi [teacher], this woman was caught in the very act of adultery. Now the Mosaic Law commands us to stone such a woman. What do You say?" They were using this question as a trap in order to have grounds to accuse Him. But Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with His finger. So when they persisted in questioning Him, He straightened up and said to them, "He who is without sin among you, let him be the first one to throw a stone." And again He bent down and wrote on the ground. Now when they heard this, they began to leave one at a time, beginning with the elders, and finally Jesus was left alone with the woman still standing before Him. After they were all gone, Jesus straightened up and said to her, "Woman, where are they? Did no one condemn you?" Then she replied, "No one, Lord." Then Jesus said to her, "Neither do I condemn you. Depart. From now on, stop this category of sinning. I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness but shall have the light of life (John 8:3-11).

Jesus Christ knew that if He told them, "Anyone among you who has not committed adultery should stone her," the woman would have been stoned to death because some in that group had never committed adultery. Instead, He used a more general term, "He who is without sin." That is wisdom at its peak!

No one threw rocks at the adulteress because Jesus Christ made it obvious to everyone — even the most piously religious — that every member of the human race has sinned and failed the Lord. Just as we would wish our sins and failures to be left in the privacy of God's hands, so we should leave the sins and failures of others in the hands of the Lord for His judgment and divine discipline. When one believer condemns or judges another believer, he supersedes the Lord as judge, a sin tantamount to blasphemy. In the case of this woman, morally degenerate unbelievers were judging an immorally degenerate unbeliever.

Notice that even our Lord, as perfect Man, delayed His answer by writing on the ground.

> Everyone should be quick to learn, slow to speak, and slow to become angry (James 1:19).

The Lord carefully considered His answer before speaking. A husband should approach problems by following in the footsteps of our Lord. He should never be in haste to answer his wife.

Temptations Leading to Adultery

> Not that I speak from want, for I have learned [through doctrine] to be content in every circumstance (Philippians 4:11).

Some people commit adultery because they are not content in their souls. When a believer is not content in one thing, he has the tendency to be discontented in every other thing, including his marriage. Lack of contentment and gratitude to God for his spouse turns his eyes away in search of another. Whenever anyone begins to think that someone is more beautiful or handsome, more interesting or pleasant than his spouse, he has clearly signaled that his soul is becoming corrupted. He has capitulated to the first temptation that, without confession, leads eventually to adultery.

> Having eyes full of adultery [mental adultery] and that cannot be restrained from sin, enticing unstable souls . . . forsaking the right way, they have gone astray (II Peter 2:14-15a).

The human eye is a direct line to the soul. What we see affects our thinking if we are not fully guarded with Bible truth. That's why we must immediately throw out any thought not worthy of the spiritual life. As believers we should be especially careful in monitoring our thoughts to ensure that biblical thinking is the doorkeeper of our souls.

> My son, keep your father's commandment [Bible doctrine] and forsake not your mother's teaching. Bind them [Bible doctrine] upon your heart always . . . When you walk, they [Bible doctrine] will lead you; when you lie down, they will guard you [with a wall of fire]; and when you awake, they will talk to you [meditation on the doctrine in the soul] . . . to preserve you from the evil woman, from the smooth tongue of the adventuress. Do not desire her beauty in your soul, and do not let her capture you with her eyelashes (Proverbs 6:20-25).

Again consider King David:

> One evening, David got up from his bed and walked around on the roof of the palace. From the roof, he saw a woman bathing. The woman was very beautiful. Then David sent messengers to get her. She came to him, and he slept with her (II Samuel 11:2,4a).

What caught David's attention was not Bathsheba's voice or the whisper of her footsteps, but her stunning body. David was already out of fellowship with God because of his disobedience. Had he gone to war, as was his duty as King, he would not have been there to gaze at Bathsheba. But he was and the message that his eyes received was quickly processed, and the outcome was the desire to commit adultery! Lust ruled his reason.

> For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries (Mark 7:21).

A wife can commit adultery without having physical contact with a man. To commit this act, all she needs is to look at a handsome man and then let her soul transcribe the picture into lust. The Bible

says that she "has already committed adultery." In reality, the only reason she didn't actually have sexual intercourse with the man was because she lacked the opportunity.

The major reason believers fall into the temptation to commit adultery is because they have not developed virtue in their souls. Their fellowship and rapport with God have not reached the height where they can declare like the apostle Paul:

> But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish [human fecal matter] (Philippians 3:7-8).

In other words, they have not developed a genuine love for God the Father. I believe that at a certain height in his spiritual life a believer is less likely to risk rupturing his indescribable union with the three members of the Godhead through obvious sin. This does not mean that a mature believer cannot commit the sin of adultery. But he is more prone to obedience and yields to the restrictions of God the Holy Spirit more readily than a baby or carnal believer. We can illustrate this point through Joseph in the Old Testament. Regarding his experience with Potiphar's wife, Moses wrote,

> So he [Potiphar] left everything he owned in Joseph's charge; and with Joseph there Potiphar did not concern himself with anything except the food that he ate. Now Joseph was handsome in form and appearance. And it came about after these events that Potiphar's wife looked with desire at Joseph, and she said, "Have sex with me." But he refused and said to his master's wife, "Behold, with me here my master does not concern himself with anything in the house, and he has put all that he owns in my charge. There is no one greater in this house than I, and he has withheld nothing from me except you because you are his wife. How then could I do this great evil and sin against God?" (Genesis 39: 6-9)

Joseph valued his rapport with God above all things. He was not living his life as unto Potiphar but as unto the Lord. To fornicate with Potiphar's wife would have been evil in that it involved sins that betrayed a trust as well as adultery.

When we reflect on the consequences of adultery, we realize that we should not get involved, for the transient pleasures of lustful sex are not worth the price exacted by God for destroying the sanctity of our marriage.

Sexual Degeneracy

All sexual degeneracy is a form of carnality, yes, but sexual sins have a higher liability and a greater punishment than most other sins because they destroy marriage, the foundation of civilization and the most powerful witness against Satan in the angelic conflict. All forms of sexual degeneracy reduce sex to animalism. Animals don't have souls. They will mate with anyone of the same species. They aren't particular. Mankind reduces himself to this level when he settles for the emptiness and destruction of sex outside marriage.

Homosexuality, lesbianism, voyeurism, pornography, and masturbation are never solutions to sexual problems and bring only punishment from God. Instant self-gratification destroys capability for future fulfilling sex. These self-centered sexual sins, as well as any other types of sex outside of marriage (all of which are self-centered!), lead to premature ejaculation and destruction of timing in intercourse, and make such a person incapable of staying power in marriage.

Male and female are different in every way, physically, mentally, emotionally, and soulishly. God did not *design* them to be alike, including in their thinking. When they try to be that which they aren't, they sink into the sins of homosexuality. God designed marriage for one biological *man* and one biological *woman.* Any sexual relationship between members of the same sex is an abomination to God.

A mother who is cruel, foul-mouthed, or domineering may influence her son toward homosexuality and other forms of sexual degeneracy. Insecure men often turn to homosexuality. A father who abuses his authority may influence his daughter toward lesbianism or nymphomania. However, everyone must take responsibility for his own actions. No one can force anyone else to sin. Every one of us sins because we have an Old Sin Nature and choose to sin. Our sexual orientation, to use the politically correct term, is our decision, not God's. We choose to be sexually degenerate.

We all have areas of weakness, some are prone to gossip, some to steal and others have same-sex attractions. Temptations in any area are not sinful — but acting on them is. Those with same-sex attraction can choose not to act out on that temptation, just as someone can decide to curb their tongue or resist the impulse to steal. In Jesus there his hope for us all.

The self righteous Pharisees asked Jesus disciples, "Why is He eating with tax collectors and sinners?" Jesus overheard and answered, "It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick; I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners" (Mark 2:16-17).

Sodom and Gomorrah are frequently cited as the premier examples of sexual degeneracy; however, the problem with those two cities was arrogance, not sexual degeneracy. Homosexuality was the fruit of that arrogance. Abraham's nephew Lot, who lived in Sodom, constantly ignored God and, he forgot that he was to live in the world but not be a part of it. A mature believer who studies Bible doctrine daily is able to live in the degenerate world and not lose his composure and inner tranquility. Homosexuality doesn't destroy a nation but wholesale acceptance of this lifestyle choice is an indication that the believers of that nation have turned their backs on God, on the spiritual life, and on His Word. History has shown us that when enough believers have given themselves over to degeneracy, God inevitably destroys that nation.

> For this cause God delivered them over to vile affections [perversions or sexual passions of dishonor]: For even their women did change the natural function [of sex] into that which is in violation of nature [lesbianism]. And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the [right] woman, burned [inflamed with sexual desire] in their lust one toward another, men with men working that which is shameful perversion and receiving in themselves that punishment of their perversion which was inevitable. Such are those who fully understand the judgment [sentence of condemnation] of God, that they who habitually practice such things are deserving of death, even so they not only continue to do the same but also have pleasure in [approve of] others who do them (Romans 1:26, 27, 32).

Sexual degeneracy in all its forms is evil; therefore, God forbids transvestism:

> A woman must not wear men's clothing, or a man wear women's clothing because the Lord your God detests anyone who does this (Deuteronomy 22:5).

Legalistic believers frequently refer to this verse as a condemnation of women wearing slacks. If we consider the time of writing it would reveal a different interpretation. Everyone at the time this verse was written wore robes! God is warning us against sexual degeneracy in all its forms. Cross-dressing frequently occurs in private, but its damage to the soul is significant.

The viewing of pornography in all its guises, from internet sites to Las Vegas shows to adult XXX movies, is evil. Pornography is popular today for two reasons: Because so many have married the wrong person that they must conjure up mental images with someone else before they can make love to the person with whom they have a lifetime sentence and because scar tissue on their souls through fornication and/or adultery makes any sex difficult or impossible without outside stimulation. Moreover it gives an addictive rush, like drugs or alcohol. Protect yourself and your sons against pornography because it can be the impetus for their downward spiral into sexual degeneracy. Pornography itself can deposit scar tissue on their souls and prevent them from enjoying or even recognizing the person God has designed for them.

God is the One who enables a believer to fulfill his God-given role as either a male or a female and to overcome gender distortion. God is the One who gives us Bible doctrine to use to preserve ourselves from sexual temptations. The solution to sexual degeneracy is the same as for every sin: Confess (acknowledge your sins to God) and consistently learn Bible truth.

> Therefore, having put off from ourselves every kind of degeneracy and moral pollution [through confession], let us start welcoming Bible doctrine, which is empowered to save our souls [the believer's soul through the spiritual life] (James 1:21).

The believer is already saved eternally. This salvation refers to saving his soul from the Old Sin Nature through the execution of

the spiritual life so that he will receive in Heaven the rewards God intends him to have for eternity.

Responses to Sex Outside of Marriage

When any member of the human race defies God by engaging in sex outside of marriage, God's punishment is severe, but self-induced misery is also a result. This misery can take several forms, and in each case as the believer piles sin upon sin upon the original sin, his misery escalates, and true happiness eludes his frantic grasp.

A believer may react to his sexual sin with guilt, feeling self-condemnation or employing self-indication. Either is a sin of arrogance, an assumption that God's grace plan of confession is incapable of covering *his* sin. Confession works for any sin, even the sin of guilt.

Some believers react with depression, self-pity, even suicide. All of these are sins of arrogance as well. Suicide is supreme arrogance, taking the decision for death out of God's hands and into our own.

Others react with a complete surrender to the lust pattern of the Old Sin Nature. They remove all restraints and give themselves fully to sexual self-gratification, in the process destroying any possibility of true sexual happiness with the spouse God designed for them. Each encounter takes them closer to total failure and eventually the sin unto death.

Many believers feel bitterness toward their sexual partner, blaming them for the consequences of their illicit sex. They convince themselves that their lost job or their family's rejection or their besmirched reputation was caused not by their own unchained lust, but by someone else's control over them. They blame their sex partner and feel bitterness toward them and eventually toward everyone.

Some turn to alcohol or drugs because promiscuity has blunted the stimulation they used to receive from sex. Alcoholism isn't a disease; however, it can become one if the alcoholic *chooses* to drink. Part of any addiction is Satan telling you that you need it. God will give you what you need to get out of your addiction. You can begin now by confessing and trusting God's grace to see you through and filling the void left by the former addiction with the hope, comfort and strength found in His Word.

> Stop getting your stimulus from wine [any false stimulation] in which is the indulgence of sensual pleasure, but keep on being filled with the Spirit (Ephesians 5:18).

Some "reformed" believers seek to pay for their sins through immersion in church activities, penance, benevolence or some form of good deeds. The world may praise them for their good deeds, but that is not God's way. God wants us to confess our sins when we fail (1 John 1:9) and consistently learn and apply His Word.

The irresponsible Christian who participates in sex outside of marriage looks for a new start. No Christian has access to a new start. Instead, he has confession, which gives him an opportunity to recover from his sins and learn God's rules. Through confession, he doesn't have a new start but a slate wiped clean by the gracious forgiveness of God. The process of climbing back into the spiritual life is a long one. The holes we dig through sin, especially sexual sins, are deep, and much time is needed in Bible study to gain the tools necessary to climb out and not fall back in.

No believer can go back in time and rectify sins or failures. The consequences of past mistakes are in God's hands. Every believer, however, can go forward on the basis of God's grace and receive all that God has for him.

As long as you are alive, God has a plan for your life. Your responsibility is to make the Lord and His Word your number-one priority and move on in the spiritual life. No sin or failure is too great for God's grace. No believer is a failure unless he fails the grace of God. We stay in touch with grace when we stay in touch with Bible doctrine. Don't fail the grace of God. Confession is the issue, not sin. A willing believer can become a winning believer.

Chapter Eleven

Pitfalls in Marriage

Problems in marriage occur when husband and wife fail to recognize that they are targets in an invisible warfare. Satan looks for cracks through which He enters and consequently destroys a marriage.

It cannot be said enough — the husband's role in marriage is huge: leadership. When a husband treats his wife with love and respect, she responds with admiration, reciprocal respect, and obedience. When a wife is not responding, she is reacting; therefore, husband, if your wife treats you with anger, bitterness, or sullen animosity, you should examine *yourself* to determine what you said or did to cause her reaction. Isolate those things and monitor them carefully to ensure that they don't sneak back into your life. Be relaxed enough toward your spouse that you can always think doctrinally and treat her with kindness, love, and leadership, even under pressure.

Even if you married for the wrong reasons or married the wrong person, with great work you can right your marriage through the power of the spiritual life. You can even become a corporate testimony if both you and your spouse reach spiritual maturity.

> So render your earthly inclinations inactive, with reference to fornication, impurity, the uncontrolled passion of degenerate lust, and greed which is equivalent to idolatry [our lusts become our idols], for which thing the wrath of God comes on those who commit disobedience [to Bible doctrine], wherein you also once conducted your lives [as unbelievers or carnal believers], living under their influence [the influence of the Old Sin Nature and the world]; but now you must discard all alike: Anger, rage, malice [the lust to hurt], blasphemy [slander against mankind or God], shameful language [any words that don't glorify God] (Colossians 3:5-8).

In this chapter, we will discuss some of the pitfalls Satan uses to disrupt your marriage so that you can arm yourself against

them. Remember that the cumulative effect of marital wounds is devastating! Know their cause so that you don't suffer their consequences. I like what Sun Tzu, a military strategist, said: "If you know the enemy and know yourself, you need not fear the result of a hundred battles. If you know yourself but not the enemy for every victory gained you will also suffer a defeat. If you know neither the enemy nor yourself you will succumb in every battle."[24]

Pseudo-Happiness

Marriage isn't a guarantee of happiness. In fact, the only guarantee that we have when we marry is that we've stepped onto Satan's battleground with all its temptations, problems, trials, and testing. That's not to say that marriage can't be the source of happiness, even extraordinary happiness.

Too many marriages ignore the happiness of God and settle for the pseudo-happiness of the world. Pseudo-happiness is dependent on stimulants while true happiness relies on the thinking of Christ in the soul. Stimulants that produce pseudo-happiness include success, the adulation of others, money, fame, power, narcotics, excessive alcohol, knowledge, gambling, and sex outside of marriage. Success, praise, fame and power fade. Money — no matter how much — becomes not enough. The need for more and more narcotics and alcohol escalates as their power to stimulate decreases. And we've already learned about the frustration, impotence, and lust associated with sex outside of marriage. Pseudo-happiness lasts as long as the stimulant lingers. If the stimulant to happiness is removed, perhaps by a disastrous event such as a tornado, a business failure, or a disease, happiness leaves with it.

Unhappy people try to build their happiness on a moment in time, and they continue to seek frantically for happiness, through a moment of pleasure or power or success or stimulation; or in the details of life: money, power, pleasure, sex, praise, social life, health, or prestige. Yet, they remain unhappy, ignoring the only source for true happiness: relationship with the Lord and learning and living by His truth in their souls.

Unhappy people are moody and use any excuse to justify their moodiness. A woman has no excuse to be moody even at that time of

[24] Sun Tzu, *The Art of War* http://classics.mit.edu/Tzu/artwar.html, sampled 8/30/2022

the month when her body would ordinarily make her so. Regardless of its origin, moodiness is a sign of unhappiness in the soul, of an unwillingness to trust God in all things.

No one enjoys being in the company of an unhappy person. In fact, those attracted to their power or drugs or money are as unhappy as they are and will be as unfaithful to them as they are to the Lord.

Interestingly, God expects a husband to make his wife happy (Deuteronomy 24:5b). Further, all a man needs for his own happiness is for his wife to be happy. Easy, isn't it, husbands? Make your wife happy, and you will be happy, too. God promises it.

The question then is how can an *unhappy* person make another person happy? It is impossible! But it is possible for an unhappy believer in the Lord Jesus Christ to find happiness.

> Happy is the one who reads the words of this prophesy, and happy are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it (Revelation 1:3).

Here in this verse in Revelation, we have two sets of people who are guaranteed to be happy or blessed: those who communicate sound Bible doctrine and those who learn and apply that doctrine on a consistent basis. The believer who studies the Word of God and practices it experiences the happiness of God, a happiness that does not depend on any stimulation or the circumstances of this life. Therefore, the primary goal of everyone should be to make Bible doctrine stand tall in his scale of value.

Happiness can't be found through seeking happiness. Happiness is a result of executing the spiritual life. No one who has pursued his own happiness has found it. Either you have joy in your soul because of your rapport with God or you are miserable because of your rejection of God and His truth. Lasting happiness can be obtained only by glorifying God.

> For whoever finds me [Bible doctrine] finds capacity for life [for happiness] and receives favor from the Lord. But whoever fails to find me harms his own soul. All who hate me [Bible doctrine] love death [the sin unto death] (Proverbs 8:35-36).

God has allotted to each of us a certain amount of time on earth. Only through the consistent Bible study can we maximize God's blessings in that time.

> For without [getting to know] Him [through personal faith and doctrine], who can eat or find happiness? To the man who pleases him, God gives wisdom, knowledge, and happiness (Ecclesiastes 2:25-26).

You should ask yourself, "Am I content regardless of what's happening in my life? Am I as happy when I'm successful as when I'm suffering?" If the answer is no, you aren't growing in the spiritual life.

> Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (II Peter 3:18).

Also, you may be ignoring God's commands.

> Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy and slander of every kind. Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk [sound Bible doctrine] so that you may grow up in your salvation [reach spiritual maturity] (I Peter 2:1-2).

Most believers think that the phrase "newborn babies" refers to new believers. It may, but more often it refers to those believers who are indifferent to Bible teaching and, therefore, have not grown in the spiritual life. Concerning those believers, the apostle Paul wrote,

> Fellow believers, I could not speak to you as to spiritual men [mature believers] but as to worldly men — merely infants in Christ. I gave you milk [basic doctrines], not solid food [advanced doctrines], because you were not yet able to receive it. Indeed, you are still not ready. You are still worldly. For since there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not worldly? Are you not acting like mere men [unbelievers]? (I Corinthians 3:1-3).

Spirituality is an absolute. At any moment you are either filled with and controlled by the Holy Spirit or you are controlled by the Old Sin Nature. Every believer is a priest; therefore, you have sole responsibility for your spiritual life. You alone decide whether your soul is ruled by God the Holy Spirit or by the Old Sin Nature. The Corinthians to whom Paul wrote in these verses were carnal believers.

Since they were not spiritual, Paul was unable to teach them. Instead, he reprimanded them. In effect he told them, "Look, you're out of fellowship. You weren't able to learn advanced spiritual truths in the past, and you are still not able to. You behave like unbelievers."

Anyone who is not learning Bible doctrine on a consistent basis will never grow in his spiritual life and, consequently, will never find true happiness in life or in marriage.

Separation

Spouses are to remain together; they aren't to run off for an hour, a week, or forever when a problem arises. Only if they remain together can they achieve a solution.

Reconcile any problems in your marriage using divine principles because marriage isn't about you — it's about being a member of the body of Christ and having a corporate testimony in Satan's appeal trial. As husband and wife, you have been committed by God with the trust to make your marriage work. Therefore, resist the temptation to be separated from each other.

Separation between two spouses for *any* reason should always be brief. Preferably, no separation should occur at all except when service such as employment, military or missionary demands. But do not use these reasons as an excuse, but rather pray for God's direction and make decisions carefully as unto the Lord.

Physical Abuse

Abuse is always wrong and always destroys the authority of the husband who uses it. In my opinion, ever since the Garden of Eden, when the man Adam sinned and lost his power to rule this world, man has taken out his frustration at that loss of power on the only one he can, the woman. A husband who beats his wife mocks God for making the woman weaker, and that is sheer unadulterated arrogance.

Men who regard women as inferior have a tendency to become physically abusive husbands. They have great potential to fail God in the devil's world unless their mental attitude of arrogance is subdued through the daily Bible study and obedience to the mandates of God. Under no circumstance should a husband think that his authority over his wife means superiority over her. Such arrogance robs him of

the very divine blessing and power he boasts of having received. His authority over his wife is a privilege given to him by God, not one that he deserves. If a husband can understand that, his ego will be deflated.

Men, I want you to know that whenever you raise your hand against your wife, you have raised your hand against one whom the Lord has given into your protection. Violence strips you of true manhood. The worst bullies are those men who hit their wives, because they defy God's mandate to protect their families. Since God always treats us with grace, He will punish an abusive husband at the time of his choosing.

Marriage is the most sensitive relationship in life, and the husband sets the tone. His intensive love must include a sensitivity and alertness to his wife as well as a thorough knowledge of her — in other words, a lack of self-centeredness on his part. No man has the right to use physical or mental abuse against his wife, (or vice versa), no matter the provocation. She needs to know that she is safe and protected in her home, that her husband stands as her shield against the world.

This protection continues in all facets of life. For example, husbands, if your wife is pregnant and the doctor determines that only the fetus or the mother can survive, one but not both, you should always choose your wife. The principle of this choice is based on your enduring devotion for your wife as mandated by God. Any husband who has trouble with this decision has trouble with the Lord!

> So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself; for no man ever at any time regarded with ill will his own human body. On the contrary, he keeps on providing for it and cherishing it just as also is the case for Christ and the Church (Ephesians 5:28-29).

The body is the frame for the soul. At marriage the wife becomes part of her husband's body; therefore, he cares for her and protects her as he would his own body. No normal man can abuse his own body; therefore, he should respect equally the body of his wife. He should accept his God-given responsibility to give his body as well as hers the nourishment, both spiritual and physical, that they need.

Boys should learn from their father's example that they are to be the authority in the home. But his parents must also teach respect for women and the value of the spiritual life. Half truths are dangerous

and could lead to bullying and that inevitably leads to revolt from the wife. Some of you husbands have abused your wife, not realizing you were sinning. Your only recourse is to confess that sin to God, and never abuse your wife again. We all make mistakes and will inevitably make more as long as we are trapped in this mortal body with its Old Sin Nature. To avoid the mistake of abusing your wife, the apostle Peter urges every husband to first understand God's design of a woman and secondly to live with her in an understanding way (I Peter 3:7).

No woman should ever tolerate violence from her husband. If a husband continues in this awful state of abusive carnality, his wife has a legitimate reason for separating from him. Every act of cruelty develops a crack in the marriage which will break wide open with time unless the wife has reached or is advancing to a virtuous status in her marriage.

A husband's failure to control abuse can result in the total failure of the marriage, in which case Satan cheers while the elect angels mourn. Do you want to disgrace God in your marriage and thus give Satan an opportunity to continue insulting God? The decision is always yours, and abuse is always wrong.

Mental Abuse

A husband or wife abuses his partner mentally by disrespecting them in words and actions or by treating them as a child or an inferior. A strong man can overwhelm his wife and totally stifle her as a person, making all the decisions and demanding his way in all things. A strong woman can assume the masculine role and intimidate her husband or cow him to the point that he decides submitting to her pseudo-authority is preferable to listening to her nagging and abuse.

What goes into a person's mind inevitably comes out in his words and actions. "For as a man thinks within himself so he is" (Proverbs 23:7a).

When a spouse has no Bible knowledge in his soul or does not apply this truth, he can't think with the divine viewpoint and comes short of treating his spouse as God intends. Consequently, he switches to frustration and bitterness, taking his anger out on her

in the form of verbal abuse. He may shout, "You are a fool!" or "You are a moron!" or "I hate that I'm married to you!" or "I wish you would drop dead!" Even if he apologizes, the damage has been done. The effect of mental abuse in marriage is dire and cumulative. Words once spoken can't be taken back.

> Don't be deceived. Evil communication does definitely corrupt the spiritual life (I Corinthians 15:33).

When a wife weeps or falls apart at something her husband thinks unimportant, he should not be critical or belittling or berating. When she has a tragedy in the home, real or imagined, he shouldn't make fun of her or reprimand her. Instead, he should put himself in her place and give her some help with the biblical principles she needs to solve the problem.

A wife should never minimize the problems of her husband. She should never say, "With all your Bible knowledge, I never thought a Christian like you would do that!" Each should treat the other with utmost respect, forgiveness, patience, and love, not exchanging insult for insult but rather giving blessing (I Peter 3:9b).

A husband must treat his wife with the utmost kindness and love reserved for the only person who fulfills his every need and desire. Likewise, a wife must set her husband apart and above every other person. They must not abuse each other even in their thoughts if they are to greatly esteem each other.

Dishonesty

Dishonesty deeply wounds a marriage; and honesty soothes. Dishonesty takes many forms: Failure to keep promises, hypocrisy, lying, shading and hiding the truth.

> Therefore, laying aside falsehood, speak truth each one of you with his neighbor because we are members of one another (Ephesians 4:25).

The Greek word that is translated "truth," *aletheia*, has three distinctive meanings:

1. Truth as opposed to falsehood, error, or insincerity (Ephesians 4:25).
2. Truth as opposed to types, emblems, or shadows (John 1:14).
3. Integrity and rectitude of nature (John 8:44).

All three meanings of truth should be a part of every marriage. Truth must be preserved and perpetuated in its every nuance if a marriage is to glorify God and bring true happiness to both spouses.

Some may say, "If my spouse discovers the truth about me, my marriage will be over in a split second." Common sense dictates that you avoid doing those things that you wouldn't want disclosed to your spouse; however, if you've already failed and your spouse finds out that you have been lying as well as doing wrong, the damage may be even greater.

> Anyone who wants to love life and see good days should refrain his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit (I Peter 3:10).

Begin your marriage on the firm foundation of the truth. Be determined to never veer from its path in thought, word, or deed. Learn to be truthful in all things, the minor and the major, knowing that you are as "one flesh" in the sight of God. Every lie or shading of the truth chips away at the virtue that is the basis for true love.

Fear

Fear makes a spouse repulsive because fear destroys love. "for there is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear" (I John 4:18a).

Fear is not part of the plan of God. The only fear that is a part of the plan of God is fear of the Lord which is the beginning of wisdom (Proverbs 10:27). A believer cannot have ultimate love in his soul for anyone and at the same time entertain fear. Have you ever wondered why the Bible esteems love? When a believer possesses and applies *agape* love, the ultimate love of the spiritual life, he has reached spiritual maturity!

The Scriptures command us to love our wives (Ephesians 5:25), our neighbors (Leviticus 19:18), our enemies (Luke 6:27), and our Lord (Mark 12:30). "Love everyone" can be translated as "become a spiritual adult." Once you become a mature believer, you can be comfortable with anyone because you have an unselfish love. A by-

product of this virtue love is an end to fear. Fear can't torment the believer who has love for all mankind because love does not produce fear but brings about trust and rapport with God, whose love is perfect and unchanging. A believer who truly believes that his future lies in God's hands will not live in fear about the future.

> For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and love [*agape*] and sound mind (I Timothy 1:7).

Fear sees the problem. Faith sees the solution. A believer who goes through life in a state of fear will be intimidated by life and never have inner tranquility or beauty. A husband who fears anything is not able to provide a sense of security for his wife. A wife who fears anything is unable to love and respect her husband. Fear destroys love. An understanding of God's undiminishable love expands our own love.

Loss of Privacy

Because of lack of exposure to sound biblical teaching, too many believers have failed to understand that God designed marriage with privacy as a main ingredient. God provides a wall of fire around marriage, and privacy surrounds that wall. Sex is the shield that separates a husband and wife from the rest of the world, insulating them from outside pressures and protecting them in virtue love.

Even though neither Adam nor Eve had a mother or father, God commanded man and woman to separate themselves from their parents, to isolate themselves in privacy with virtue love for each other. God in His omniscience anticipated future marriages and thus made marriage a private matter, a sexual coalescence of bodies into one flesh (the meaning of the word "cleave" in the Old English) to the exclusion of all others. In marriage, a husband and wife make a permanent change from family unity to marital unity and from family privacy to marital privacy and intimacy. They form this new unity by leaving father and mother and having sex in marriage.

Anything that happens within the confines of the marital home, anything that is said between man and wife, anything that pertains to them must remain as God has mandated: private, unknown to anyone else. Even children must never be exposed to the private matters between their parents, especially disagreements.

A husband and wife are wise not to advertise their problems to the rest of the world. Instead, they should choose to copy the humility that Christ displayed during His earthly ministry. They should use grace toward one another, remembering that they have received unmerited grace from God.

A man can destroy his life by misuse of his tongue. A wife can destroy her security and happiness by the wrong use of her tongue.

> And the tongue is a fire, the very world of iniquity; the tongue is set among our members as that which defiles the entire body and sets on fire the course of our life and is set on fire by hell (James 3:6).

One ember of gossip can burn down a marriage. One unguarded word spoken in the heat of emotion can spark complete havoc in your life and the lives of all those you love. One of the responsibilities of a husband is to protect himself and his wife from any chance of gossip.

Arrogance makes one spouse think he is always right. In doing so, he is lying to himself. The tendency then is to lie to others, feeling that he is speaking nothing but the truth. Self-justification leads to marriage-destroying gossip. A wife should never malign her husband or gossip about him. A husband should never malign his wife or gossip about her. This allows others to invade the privacy of their marriage. Every time either spouse whines about the other, they have broken their wedding vows. Don't succumb to the self-righteous temptation to ask others to pray for your spouse, using such a forum as an excuse to vent your bitterness or frustration about your spouse.

> Wise men store up discernment [through Bible doctrine in their souls], but with the mouth of the foolish [those negative to Bible doctrine] ruin is inevitable and imminent (Proverbs 10:14).

Doors serve two purposes: To provide privacy for sexual recreation and to perpetuate privacy in the interchange of words between spouses. Even behind the privacy of closed doors, don't mention your spouse's shortcomings. Don't try to convince them to change. Be kind. Be compassionate. Be loving. Be forgiving.

Role Model Arrogance

Role model arrogance is putting your spouse on a pedestal of your own exaggerated expectations, only to find that they are flawed. Surprise, surprise — one day you discover that they have an Old Sin Nature! You then spend your life trying to get them to live up to your unrealistic but adamantly held expectations. You are both miserable!

Role model arrogance gravitates toward the trend of the Old Sin Nature of self-righteous arrogance, thus making a hero out of self and a villain out of your spouse. An arrogant believer never takes responsibility for being arrogant! Arrogance always destroys the "dream spouse" that arrogance created.

While expecting others to fit into the role we've designed for them, we also have a role model for ourselves which we are sure we fulfill completely. We see ourselves unrealistically just as we see our spouse unrealistically. We rationalize, excuse, and condone our own sins, failures, aberrations, and flaws while condemning them in our spouse. We fail to see our own flaws yet see our spouse's with supreme clarity.

In this state of sin, a husband may place inordinate importance on making his wife obey him. He may expect her to be constantly kind, tender, caring, thoughtful, and loving. He may expect meals to always be feasts and the house to always be immaculate. No woman is capable of such unreasonable expectations.

A wife may have created a mental image of her "knight in shining armor." A movie or television hero may become her idea of the ideal mate. She may substitute the fantasy of romance novels for the reality of God's plan as revealed in Scripture. Whatever the source of her fantasies, whether movies, soap operas, novels, or a vivid imagination, a perfect husband is a hallucination, no more possible than a perfect wife. Disillusion means you trusted in an illusion!

Jesus Christ should be our only role model because He is the only perfect human being ever to live. Pride is commendable when we're taking pride in our Hero, Jesus Christ, but not in our own accomplishments. Our Hero is unique in His identity, matchless in His accomplishments, and incomparable in His merits. Don't make the mistake of expecting that perfection from anyone else, yourself included. (That's why God graciously gives us confession!)

Nagging

Nagging can either be loud — the screaming of the female shrew or the shouting of a bullying husband — or quiet — the drip, drip, drip of constant criticism. Either type destroys any possibility of happiness in marriage. The accuracy of the nagging makes no difference. Nagging is always wrong and makes the nagging spouse repulsive.

A nagging spouse is self-righteously arrogant and always right in their own eyes; therefore, they feel obligated to superimpose their own viewpoint on his spouse, correcting her in all areas of life. Such legalism never leads to change, only to rebellion.

Word by nagging word, a wife tears down her own house with her own hands (Proverbs 14:1, 25:24). Every time she nags her husband, she makes herself ugly through self-justification and self-righteous arrogance. If she appears to have succeeded in changing him, she has made him a wimp and a weakling.

A wife should never waste time criticizing her husband, nor should she shout "Hallelujah" in her soul if her husband is under divine punishment for his abuse of authority over her. She should not say to her husband, "It's about time you got clobbered! I knew it was coming!" Neither should she use prayer to manipulate her husband to respond the way she wants.

> Better is a dry morsel and quietness [rapport] than a house full of feasting with strife (Proverbs 17:1).

A husband and wife must have a mutual willingness to accept facts and reality, the most obvious of which is that they both have Old Sin Natures. The best marriages are harmony through a shared spiritual life, not strife through battling Old Sin Natures.

The Bible tells us that a woman can win her husband over through quiet execution of the spiritual life. Without a word of nagging or recrimination, she can have the invisible impact of spiritual maturity. Do you dare to trust in the power of the spiritual life, or do you feel obligated to step out of it and help God by telling your spouse his faults? The tongue of wisdom speaks loudest through silence.

Discontent

You should never wonder if you married the right person. Now they are your right person because you married them! Never

second-guess bad decisions. Instead, accept the grace of God and keep moving in the spiritual life.

Nostalgia about the good old days before marriage or the early days of marriage is a crafty trick of Satan. God intends today to be the best day of your life. Don't wish for that which time has imbued with the rosy glow of unreality. Be content with today. Even more, rejoice in it and its manifold blessings, including your spouse.

> This is the day the Lord has made. We will rejoice and be glad in it (Psalm 118:24).

Don't try to change your spouse into the person you've always imagined you should have married. No one is perfect. Everyone has an Old Sin Nature. We are responsible for changing our own lives, not for changing anyone else's! The issue isn't your spouse's sins or failures. The issue is God's grace toward you. The grace of God and the filling of the Holy Spirit are the powers for change.

Bitterness

Many marital problems result in the innocent party feeling bitterness for having been unfairly treated. God has never given anyone the right to be bitter about anything, even about genuinely unfair treatment. Forgiveness through virtue love is the solution. Either you forgive as God through Christ forgives you, or you live in bitterness.

Bitterness comes from arrogance and a lack of orientation to grace and manifests itself in arrogant self-centeredness and self-justification. Bitterness is the fuel that powers the sins of arrogance. A bitter person does not recognize his own sins, often considering himself a paragon of virtue, while pointing out the sins of others. They change the viewpoint of any argument so that they can win. They use sinful behavior such as slander and self-righteous anger to prove themselves right. Righteous indignation is their favorite activity. Bitterness becomes a habit of arrogance that keeps one perpetually out of fellowship. To the extent that anyone is bitter, they will fail in life and destroy their capacity for true love.

> See to it that no one falls short of the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many (Hebrews 12:15).

Bitterness turns love into hatred, happiness into malice, and blessing into cursing. A bitter person blames God and man for his own bad decisions, flaws, and failures. Bitterness is venom in the soul and destroys all chance of love with God or spouse.

More than any other sin, bitterness, which is the by-product of lack of forgiveness, is the guarantee of perpetual carnality. All Satan has to do is plant the seed of bitterness, and we enjoy nursing it to life. We were treated unfairly so we think it only fair to make that unfairness known to all — and make everyone pay!

Bitterness frequently leads to revenge, usually involving depriving a spouse of love, sex, consideration, or care — the very things that make marriage succeed. When a spouse withholds what they should be giving, they destroy their marriage. Because bitterness is self-perpetuating and leads to so many other sins, God demands that we abandon all bitterness.

> All bitterness, including both anger and wrath [reaction to anger], both clamor [marital shouting] and slander [malicious defamation of character] must be removed from you along with all malice [the lust to hurt your spouse]. But become kind toward each other, compassionate and forgiving each other just as God the Father through the agency of Christ has forgiven us (Ephesians 4:31-32).

Kindness, the antithesis of bitterness, means thinking about someone else, not yourself. Compassion walks hand in hand with kindness. Kindness and compassion can't co-exist with bitterness. The believer who nurtures the wrongs done to him also nurtures bitterness in his soul. He creates his own misery and destroys single-handedly his chance for happiness in life and in marriage. However, you have been and still are fulfilling the Royal Law on the basis of the Scripture [Leviticus 19:18], "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," you are doing a right thing in a right way. (James 2:8)

You must never seek revenge for real or imagined wrongs, injuries, or injustices. You must never bear a grudge. You must forgive and forget, never referring to past failures or sins again. Painful memories can be cured by the recall of the biblical view: God has dealt with everything already; therefore, we should deal with it and forget it. When a spouse forgives and truly forgets, he truly loves

with both virtue love and personal love. Any spouse who can pass the forgiveness test and never remember past wrongs has secured true love and real happiness.

Jealousy

The mental attitude sin of jealousy destroys love. If you are prone to jealousy before marriage, marriage will be difficult for you because marriage demands trust. If jealousy is not your area of weakness and you've been free from it all your life, you can be certain to experience it after marriage. Anyone who loves feels occasional twinges of jealousy, a vicious and irrational manifestation of the Old Sin Nature.

> Jealousy is as cruel as the grave. Its flames are flames of fire (Song of Solomon 8:6b).

Just as the grave takes away loved ones, so jealousy takes away our capacity to love. Jealousy causes the same type of bereavement as death, except that the one feeling jealousy becomes hard and cruel, not soft and compassionate as with grief.

Corrupted by jealousy, thinking becomes impossible and irrational emotion takes its place. If you have bitter jealousy and inordinate ambition in your mind, stop being arrogant and stop lying against the truth [stop distorting Bible truth to suit yourself] . . . Where jealousy and inordinate ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil deed (James 4:14, 16).

Let us conduct our lives in what is appropriate for the daytime, not in lascivious parties or in drunkenness or in extra-marital intercourse in unrestrained promiscuity or in altercations based on self-interest or jealousy. On the contrary, we must invest ourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ and stop giving forethought to the Old Sin Nature with a view to its craving (Romans 13:13-14).

> Because we belong to the day, we must live decent lives for all to see. Don't participate in the darkness of wild parties and drunkenness, or in sexual promiscuity and immoral living, or in quarreling and jealousy. Instead, clothe yourself with the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ. And don't let yourself think about ways to indulge your evil desires (Romans 13:13-14 NLT).

Jealousy, promiscuity, anger, and all mental attitude sins are linked. Each feeds on the others. Instead of remaining under their control, invest your soul with the thinking of Jesus Christ. Have a shared interest in the resolution of the angelic conflict. Live the spiritual life with the spouse God gave you for your maximum enjoyment, trusting them to love you as unto the Lord.

Miscibility

Miscibility is a chemical term meaning that the combining of two or more ingredients does not alter the individual identity of each. The Trinity, the Hypostatic Union, the Church as one body in Christ, and marriage are all miscible unions. Each of these is the union of different entities with the identity of each member of that union being retained.

In marriage, the sexual coalescence of bodies and intellectual coalescence of souls are both miscible unions in which husband and wife become as one while retaining their individual identities. Allowing a spouse the freedom to be himself and at the same time to enjoy the unique intimacy of marriage is possible only in spiritual adulthood and increases as both parties advance to spiritual maturity. Spouses *must* develop a capacity for intimacy while allowing each other the right to privacy in order for their marriage to glorify God. Privacy and individuality are lost in the act of sex but never sacrificed in marriage. Again, we see God's amazing use of sex to unite two quite different individuals into one cohesive and integrated flesh.

Total dependency on a spouse is total imprisonment. While a man may be flattered at first by his wife's dependence on him for everything, he will eventually feel trapped. On the other hand, a dependent man makes his wife into a mother and a slave.

A husband should not smother the individuality of his wife in her human pursuits or her spiritual life. He should never force her to go to church, listen to Bible teaching or in any way force his spiritual values on her. Likewise, a wife should never try to mold her husband into the spiritual being she desires. If he doesn't want to say grace before meals, she should graciously allow his wish. God doesn't force us to be saved or to execute the spiritual life. He doesn't force truth down our throats. He leaves those decisions to our free will. We should have the same grace attitude toward our spouses. Motivation

for learning biblical truth must come from within; however, we can provide inducement to our unbelieving or carnal spouse through our virtue love. By applying the biblical principles we have learned, we can make the value of those doctrines obvious to our spouse. They may eventually become interested in learning the truths that transformed us into such loving spouses. Change comes from love and grace, not from coercion or anger.

> For the anger of man does not accomplish the righteous purpose of God (James 1:20).

Only marriages in which both spouses understand and practice the principle of miscibility will become corporate testimonies for God in Satan's appeal trial.

Loneliness

Loneliness isn't curable by sex or an active social life. Loneliness is homesickness of the soul and is curable only by being grounded in the truths of the Bible which will give you confidence and trust in God. Mature believers never feel loneliness because they are fortified with the knowledge that God in His three persons dwells in them and will never leave them.

Anyone who can't live in peace with himself can't live in peace with anyone else. Loneliness isn't cured by being around others, even a spouse. Attending social events at church is not a bad thing; however, it doesn't cure loneliness. Studying the Bible in church does. Only then can it dispel loneliness.

Marriage doesn't cure loneliness, though a marriage based on Bible doctrine in the souls of both spouses erects barriers that prevent loneliness in their lives. The truth that form happiness and inner beauty in a wife's soul are the same resources by which she handles the problem of loneliness when she must spend time apart from her husband. A woman of inner beauty and happiness is able to entertain herself. Both spouses must remember that no one but his spouse can fill the emptiness of being apart. Loneliness should never be an excuse for adultery.

Family

Parents are to be loved and appreciated always, but they have nothing to say about the marriage of their child, either in choosing the right spouse or in making decisions within the marriage. The husband is the authority, the only authority, in marriage. This does not exclude parental advice. A wise child often takes parental advice to heart. Ultimately the matured adult is to make the final decision leading to his or her future.

God commands spouses to leave their parents when they marry. This mandate refers not only to leaving the family home physically but mentally as well. Parents should no longer have any authority over any facet of their children's lives. A husband and wife are to cut the apron strings that tie them to their parents; they are to form a new family unit. If problems arise between a wife and her parents, her husband takes her side. Likewise, a wife takes the side of her husband. A wife chose to marry her husband; therefore, she must obey him alone. She must lean on him alone and want to be with him only.

A wife who loves her children more than her husband destroys both her children and her marriage. The Lord comes first, then the husband and then the children. That does not detract from the love for the children — it takes much time, love, affection and understanding and discipline to raise up a child in the way he should go. But all competition for affection is wrong. A spouse should be loved more than anyone else, even children.

Friends

As a Christian, you should hold yourself to the higher norms and standards of God. Too often Christians are convinced that they need to spend time among unbelievers or carnal believers, witnessing to them. Evangelism is a part of our witness as Church Age believers. Our main witness is in the angelic conflict, primarily to angels and against Satan through the execution of our spiritual life. And the greatest witness of all is the corporate witness of marriage. In fact, God warns us to keep away from those who have rejected the Word of God. We are to make Bible doctrine the number one priority in our lives and associate with those who share our positive volition. We are to live in the world but not be of it.

You will undoubtedly come into contact with unbelievers and Christians who are not living a life obedient to God. These may be acquaintances but they are not those who should be your closest friends. Select those with care because a "man's character is known by the company he keeps" (Proverbs 13:20).

If a husband and wife associate with adulterers and fornicators they will be influenced by that lifestyle.

> But now I am writing to you that you are not to be intimate with anyone who asserts to be a fellow member of the Royal Family but who is sexually immoral (I Corinthians 5:11).

When someone is not honoring God with his life, don't allow him to draw you down to his level. Beware of anyone who tries to talk you into compromising God's principles even in the smallest way. Choose your friends based on their love for the Lord and obedience to Him, not on their personalities. God expects you to:

> Conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel (Philippians 1:27a).

A husband is to protect his wife from wrong decisions, including the decision to have friendships with those who do not honor God through living the spiritual life and with those who have rejected Bible study for the legalism of religion found in many churches.

God did not put us on earth to be distracted by a big social life. We are here to bring Him glory, to learn and apply His truth and to reach out with integrity and the love of Jesus to those the Lord brings into our life. We are His ambassadors and He knows who to connect us with.

> And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind . . . (Romans 12:2a).

Marriage is our greatest opportunity to glorify God.

Finances

The Bible warns us to be wary about our attitude toward money.

> For we brought nothing into the world, and it is obvious that we can take nothing out of it either. But if we have food and shelter, we shall be content with these things. But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and into a snare and into many foolish and harmful desires which plunge them into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some [carnal believers], being possessed by it, have wandered from the faith [from Bible doctrine] and have pierced themselves with many a pang (I Timothy 6:7-9).

> Let your character be free from the love of money, being content with what you have; for He Himself has said, "I will never fail you nor will I forsake you" (Hebrews 13:5).

A spouse who loves money tends to neglect his family and often is deceitful about his earnings. Lying about or hiding earnings is not a true manifestation of partnership in marriage. One of the major reasons a spouse keeps secret accounts is a sense of insecurity, which is a sign of a spiritual deficiency. He fears the future. While living in a state of fear, he can't enjoy his marriage. If uncertainty of the future is the reason you are hiding your income from your wife or husband, then you need to grow up spiritually. Give heed to the words of the apostle Peter:

> But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (II Peter 3:18).

The second reason some men hide their income from their wives (and vice versa) is because they have failed to recognize their spouse as an individual who is united with them as in one flesh (Genesis 2:23). In the sight of God, husband and wife are considered one entity. They should share one interest, one bed, and one account. They should strive for a common goal: the betterment of the family and the glorification of God.

Be very cautious about incurring debt. Do not buy what you cannot afford. It is wise to have a budget and stay within it. The Bible has much to say about the believer and money, such as:

The rich rule over the poor, and the borrower is slave to the lender (Proverbs 22:7).

"But don't begin until you count the cost. For who would begin construction of a building without first calculating the cost to see if there is enough money to finish it? (Luke 14:28).

Chapter Twelve

Divorce & Remarriage

The misery that a careless marriage can create is nothing short of a mini-hell on earth. Many believers have been unable to endure this and have resorted to divorce, failing in God's plan. The number of Christian marriages that have ended in divorce is alarming and heartbreaking,

Every marriage that ends in divorce is a failure. Christians should stay married for their own sakes and the sakes of their children, but more importantly for the sake of Jesus Christ and the prosecution of Satan in his appeal trial.

Remember marriage is more than a contract. It is a covenant with God. From a biblical perspective, marriage is a union of a man and a woman before God.

Marriages don't have to end in divorce to be failures. More marriages break down than break up. Any husband and wife who fail to execute the spiritual life have failed in marriage as well as in the spiritual life. God considers marriage a success, not because it hasn't ended in divorce, but because husband and wife are on the witness stand together testifying against Satan in his appeal trial.

The institution of marriage never fails. God designed it; therefore, it can't fail. People fail. Failure in marriage indicates failure in the spiritual life. But take heart, God has given you the resources you need to succeed in your marriage and your spiritual life.

Divorce

Biblical divorce is a grace provision from God for the dissolution of an impossible marriage. Note the word "impossible," not unpleasant or uncomfortable or imperfect or disappointing but *impossible*. Divorce is allowed only on the grounds of desertion, including the sexual desertion of adultery and the authority desertion of physical abuse.

Because both husband and wife have Old Sin Natures, the inevitable manifestations of the Old Sin Nature are *not* grounds

for abandoning marriage. Loss of respect or love for a spouse is no reason for separation or divorce but rather an incentive for advance in the spiritual life.

Divorce is never mandated by God but is merely permitted for immature Christians who are unwilling to apply virtue love and forgiveness to their spouses. Anyone who chooses not to divorce an adulterous or abusive spouse, who chooses instead to forgive and forget, has demonstrated the highest virtue in the spiritual life! Only a man or woman of great integrity can survive and take the needed steps to repair a marriage after the unfaithfulness of their mate. Even then restoration can only come through forgiveness and consistent application of truth from God's Word.

Christian marriages do not fail because of unfaithfulness, financial problems, or irreconcilable differences but because believers fail to execute the plan of God; and the greatest failure in the execution of the plan of God is failure to exercise virtue love. A spouse without virtue love who can't erase past sins and problems from his mind harbors memories which become festering wounds, and eventually erupt and destroy the marriage.

Divorce is never a solution to a problem but an escape from a problem. If you leave your right man or right woman through divorce, you will never find another, no matter how many times you remarry. God has not designed anyone else for you. You will discover too late that your right spouse is still in your soul. You can never escape him or replace him, no matter how many sex partners you have. God designed them and only them to be in your soul.

Divorce is a sensitive subject. Some theologians and pastor-teachers have tried to explain away the verses dealing with divorce. Others have worked hard to insert their own ideas about divorce into the written Word of God. Still others have ignored the subject altogether. Anyone who wants to do justice to the inerrant Word of God must be prepared to handle the subject of divorce objectively.

When the Lord gave Eve to Adam in the Garden of Eden, He didn't intend them to divorce each other. He didn't intend their future offspring to divorce. "For I hate divorce," says the Lord (Malachi 2:16a).

Just as God would never divorce us from our salvation once we have believed, so He expects us to continue in our marriage, regardless of the circumstances. Believers are members of the Royal

Family of God forever, and God expects that same fidelity and permanence from His children who marry.

Grounds for Divorce

God is specific about those circumstances that are legitimate reasons for divorce in Christian marriage. These include desertion in its many guises: sexual unfaithfulness and severe physical abuse, including molestation of children and incest. God doesn't demand divorce in these situations, but He allows it.

In Old Testament times, Moses gave permission for divorce regardless of the reason because of the hardness of the hearts of Israel, the scar tissue on their souls. Jesus Christ said that these causes were frivolous and tragic. While He discouraged divorce, He recognized that circumstances might make divorce legitimate.

When an Unbeliever Believes

What happens when a married unbeliever believes in Christ as his Lord and personal Savior? Is divorce from his still-unbelieving spouse the answer? No. A believer married to an unbeliever has only one option in the spiritual life: to go it alone. This does *not* mean divorce but advancing alone in the spiritual life. His advance will be difficult, but they must persevere, never treating their unbelieving spouse with anything but love and respect. Reacting to any unfairness means they have failed in their marriage as well as in their spiritual life.

The apostle Paul used the entire seventh chapter of I Corinthians to deal with the issue of marriage, divorce, and remarriage. Keep in mind that this letter, although specifically written to the Church at Corinth, is in fact a letter to all of the churches in all generations of the Church Age.

> But to the rest [where one spouse is a believer and the other an unbeliever] I speak, not the Lord [because Christ did not speak on this while on earth because believers weren't yet able to understand], if any brother has a wife who does not believe, and she consents to live with him, let him not leave her. Also if a woman has a husband who is not a believer and he is willing to live with her, she must not divorce him.

> For the unbelieving husband has been sanctified [set apart unto God] by agency of his wife; and the unbelieving wife has been sanctified through her husband, else were their children unclean, but now they are set apart to God. But if the unbeliever leaves, let him leave. A saved spouse is not under bondage [no longer married] in such cases, but God has called us to live in tranquility [harmonious rapport with God] (I Corinthians 7:12-15).

If an unbelieving spouse wishes to remain married to their believing spouse, the believer is to continue in the marriage. The reasons for remaining married are many: The possibility of winning the unsaved partner to Jesus Christ, the need to provide a secure environment for any children, the principle of promoting stability in society and of accepting responsibility for decisions whether good or bad, and recognition of the principle that two wrongs don't make a right.

The believer shouldn't try to make life so miserable that the unbeliever will leave. Instead, his kindness toward his spouse will increase as his love for God increases.

God deals with the believer under grace while He deals with the unbeliever under certain principles and laws. In a marriage between a believer and an unbeliever, God deals with the family as a whole. God treats the children in the family as He would believers. The believing spouse becomes the basis for blessing by association for the unbelieving spouse and their children.

On the other hand, if the unbelieving spouse decides to divorce his believing spouse, the believing spouse has the right to remarry (I Corinthians 7:15). If the unbeliever leaves without divorce, no matter whether he or she stays away a long or short time, the believer should not remarry. He should be reconciled to his status and use it as an opportunity to grow in the spiritual life. He should trust the Lord to resolve the problem at the right time. God commands us to stay as we are in marriage and concentrate on growing spiritually.

Every one of us has made costly mistakes in this life. Some of us have divorced for the wrong reasons, married again, and then accepted Christ as our Savior. The question is should the current marriage be ended since the first marriage shouldn't have ended in divorce? This is my opinion: Do not divorce. All of our sins before

salvation are forgiven in the moment that we believe. A previous unwarranted divorce is wiped clean away in that moment, as are all other sins. I would advise you to guard your soul with Bible doctrine to ensure that Satan does not constantly use these past failures to encroach on your spiritual life. Satan needs merely an inch of space in which to build enough guilt, worry, self-pity, and fear to fill an entire football field. When you fret and worry, you disobey God's mandate to worry about nothing; therefore, Paul cautioned every believer not to give Satan that space (Ephesians 4:27).

If you are married, remain in that marriage and study the Bible consistently so that you can be the best possible spouse.

Remarriage

When a spouse dies, remarriage is legitimate. When divorce is legitimate, remarriage of the innocent party is legitimate. The remarriage of the adulterous or abusive spouse is prohibited by God. If the guilty spouse remarries, he is living in adultery and so is his new spouse. Confession is the solution because it brings forgiveness.

Pre-salvation divorce and remarriage are not issues because all pre-salvation sins are blotted out at the moment of salvation.

The victim of a divorce gimmick has the right of remarriage. A husband or wife is the victim of such a gimmick if his spouse is trying to get rid of him.

> When a man has taken a wife and married her and it comes to pass that she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some uncleanness in her, let him write her a bill of divorcement. And when she [the innocent victim of the divorce gimmick] is departed out of his house, she may go and be another man's wife (Deuteronomy 24:1-2).

In the divorce gimmick described in these verses, a husband divorces his wife for the express purpose of remarrying. The same criterion applies to a wife who divorces her husband because she has someone else in mind. The divorce gimmick is based on sly self-justification and is a combination of hypocrisy and sinfulness. The guilty spouse wants to marry someone else so he deludes himself into believing that he deserves to divorce his present spouse. The victim of

a divorce gimmick is allowed to remarry. The guilty spouse isn't.

When spouses divorce, marry another, and again divorce, God does not allow remarriage with the first spouse, even if that spouse is your right man or right woman.

> Then her first husband who previously divorced her can't remarry her since she has been defiled [through having sex with her second husband, which has permanently destroyed the authority of her first husband], for that is an abomination before the Lord. Therefore, you will not bring sin into the land (Deuteronomy 24:4).

In such a situation, the first husband has lost his authority over his wife to the second husband. He can never regain that authority. Such a remarriage is doomed to failure and, therefore, is denied by God.

After a divorce or the death of a spouse, the flesh of a "one flesh" union has been torn to shreds; therefore, an extended elapse of time — years even! — is necessary in order to heal. That time should be spent in concentrated spiritual growth under the mentorship of God the Holy Spirit and the teaching of a biblically grounded pastor.

God doesn't forbid marrying a divorced person who was the innocent party; however, caution should be taken. Divorce by its very nature is a sign of inability to handle problems. A divorced man or woman has greater potential for scar tissue on the soul, and scar tissue prohibits growing in the spiritual life. That said, a divorced believer who has gone on to reach spiritual maturity has the divine viewpoint necessary to succeed in marriage. Being the victim in a failed marriage shouldn't be held against him if he is growing in grace and is the person God has designed for you.

All sins related to marriage and divorce are forgiven in confession for the believer and in salvation for the unbeliever; however, the scar tissue on the soul lingers and can be dealt with only through the consistent study and application of Bible truth.

Chapter Thirteen

Marriage Counseling & Psychology

The United States of America probably has more psychologists than any country in the world, and yet our divorce rate exceeds that of any nation. Everyone wants someone else to solve his problems for him. No one wants to find the solutions for himself.

Because marriage is a battleground and because everyone has an Old Sin Nature, everyone will have marital problems. Problems are inevitable, and not every solution is a good one. Because marriage is a *divine* institution based on *divine* principles, a believer's problems can't be solved by the thinking of some other person, only by the thinking of Jesus Christ.

Problems in marriage don't come about in an instant, and they can't be solved instantly either. Emotions cannot think. Wisdom and sound thinking come from consistently learning God's Word and applying it. Solutions come from keeping your focus on the Lord and His truth rather than on your problems.

Christian Degeneracy

Marital problems are symptoms of Christian degeneracy, both moral and immoral. The moral man's sins are predominantly mental; the immoral man's sins include his soul plus his body. Sins that are confined to the soul, such as arrogance, self-pity, guilt, fear, vindictiveness, and self-righteousness, have a tendency to multiply more rapidly than those that include the body, such as adultery, drunkenness, and murder. Legalistic, holier-than-thou Christians have as many marital problems as do hedonistic, immoral Christians. Legalistic Christians are just better at hiding their problems from both themselves and others. The morally degenerate believer is outwardly pure, but his thoughts still center around sensual indulgence. Satan loves those who are morally degenerate. They seduce other believers away from truth and a biblical wordview in a more subtle way than the obviously degenerate ever could.

> Since you died with Christ to the basic principles of this world, why, as though you still belong to it, do you submit to its rules: "Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch!" These rules are all destined to perish with use because they are based on human commands and teachings. Such regulations, indeed, have an appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship, their false humility, and their harsh treatment of the body, but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence (Colossians 2:20-23).

Problems are a product of man's bad decisions, but when he refuses to take responsibility for those decisions, he remains in a status of arrogant subjectivity which renders him unteachable, no matter how gifted his pastor. Such a carnal believer desperately wants to justify his bad decisions rather than admit he sinned. He can't change the direction of his life so he compounds the problem by seeking human viewpoint solutions from psychology, counseling, psychic hotlines, etc. He only considers solutions that are quick, easy, and painless, solutions that excuse or justify his sins. Christian marriage was not designed to respond to such solutions. Only God has all the facts. Depending on biblical solutions will result in ultimate, though not necessarily immediate, success.

The symptoms of both moral and immoral degeneracy can't be removed permanently until the degeneracy is cured. The solution begins with confession (admit your sin to God) followed by consistent Bible study and application. Virtue is necessary for success in marriage, and virtue is the monopoly of God. Virtue is attainable by man through manufacturing it in the soul through the study of Bible truth and the mentorship of God the Holy Spirit. Only God can give virtue; therefore, counseling and other human solutions are not the answer.

Now, we need to examine how the Word of God works, namely, by tearing down and building up.

Tearing Down

When a pastor communicates the Word of God accurately line by line, precept upon precept, the Holy Spirit takes his teaching and fills it with power and helps the believer to understand the teaching.

Understanding and then believing this divine teaching are the equivalent of accepting the tools necessary to break down the engine of the carnal soul. Keep in mind that God the Father is the Chief Engineer who designed the soul and that only He can provide the tools for tearing down a self-centered soul and re-constructing a God-centered soul. No tools but His can do the job!

Bible truth with its divine norms and standards is transferred to the soul of the believer through simple belief in its truth. Then, the work of tearing down begins. God the Holy Spirit slowly destroys all arrogant human viewpoint thinking as well as all other sins and emotions opposed to His dynamic plan. Into the vacuum created by their destruction, He places Bible truth. James had this process in mind when he wrote,

> Therefore, having removed all filthiness [mental attitude sins] and the overflow of wickedness [sins of the tongue and other overt sins], in humility receive and retain the impregnated word [doctrine in the human spirit], which is able to deliver your spiritual lives [from perpetual carnality] (James 1:21).

The filling of the Holy Spirit allows the truth taught by a teaching pastor to be placed in the soul of the believer who has no unconfessed sin in his life. Faith transfers that doctrine from his mind to his human spirit as the thinking of Christ.

God commands us to advance quickly in the spiritual life. We are to persevere[25] in order to reach our objective: spiritual maturity to enjoy the happiness, peace, blessing, joy, and all the power that God has to give us. We should never stop learning or become indifferent to Bible teaching which will equip us to follow God's plan for our lives and receive the rewards He has stored up for us in time and eternity.

> By this, virtue love comes to completion in us so that we may have confidence in the day of assessment [the Day of Christ Jesus, the Judgment Seat of Christ] because as He is [in terms of virtue love] so are we in this world (I John 4:17).

[25] Perseverance is a reward issue, not a salvation issue. Rewardability is contingent on continuity in learning and applying doctrine.

If we love as Christ loved, with virtue love for all mankind, we have confidence that we will receive our rewards from Him in eternity.

The Word of God is designed "to judge the thoughts and intentions of the soul" (Hebrews 4:12), helping us to understand and achieve God's expectations. When divine principles are not our norms and standard, we are low in God's estimation. The more we expose ourselves to the accurate teaching of the Word of God, the more God's Word points out those things that are detrimental to our spiritual advancement and unhealthy to our marriage. Once the Word of God has humbled us through the tearing down process, God the Holy Spirit takes us to the next step.

Building Up

The same Word of God that breaks down false notions, worldly ideas, and all other garbage in the carnal believer's soul is the very Word that helps him reconstruct his soul as God intended. He begins the building process with the basics of doctrine, moving consistently and persistently to more advanced Bible doctrines.

> Therefore leaving the elementary teaching [basic doctrines] about the Christ, let us press on to maturity (Hebrews 6:1).

> Stop being transformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing [renovation] of your thinking [doctrinal orientation], that you may prove what the will of God is, namely, that which is good [of intrinsic value] and well-pleasing [compatible with the plan of God] and complete [mature] (Romans 12:2).

The renovation of our thoughts is accomplished over a period of time by giving Bible teaching number one priority in our thinking and by organizing our lives around the daily study and application of His Word, which is then available to guard our souls against human viewpoint and all false wisdom of the world, freeing us from enslavement to Satan's policy. We must always remember that we can't know the will of God for our lives without knowing the Word of God.

Note: We are never called upon to change or reform others. The Word of God renovates — from the inside out. When we fill our

souls with God's truth we become a beacon of light that reveals the perfection of God's plan to others. We don't change others. The Word of God in our souls changes us, and the same Word in their souls changes them. Our new lifestyle of divine viewpoint, not our words, is our letter to our carnal and unbelieving friends. Through living the spiritual life, we show them the only true and lasting solution to all problems in life, including all problems in marriage.

After many hours, months, and years of study under the teaching of a biblically grounded pastor-teacher, we become mature believers. The doctrines of hamartiology[26], Christology[27], and soteriology[28] — along with a vast array of other doctrines — are imbedded in our souls, ready for use at the proper and necessary time. By using these doctrines on a daily basis to renew our thinking, we become grace oriented.

Through an understanding of the deeper doctrines of God, a spiritually mature husband and wife carry Christ's attitude of humility and virtue love into their marriage; therefore, they handle problems from the divine point of view rather than from the human point of view. Because of their grace orientation and understanding of the power of their own Old Sin Natures, they love each other even at those times when one of them fails and answers the call of the Old Sin Nature. They are no longer arrogant but filled with the humility of Christ. The biblical truth which they continue to daily pour into their souls, has reconstructed and continues to reconstruct their souls.

This process of edifying the soul is never ending. Garbage still creeps into the soul any time Bible study is neglected for even a day. With the garbage comes those mental attitude sins that caused the marital problems in the first place. The only solution is admitting to God our sin of neglect of His Word and any other sins. If we fail to confess them, the seepage of garbage escalates, eventually overriding our souls and destroying our happiness. Husband and wife can help

[26] Hamartiology is the doctrine of sin.

[27] Christology refers to those doctrines pertaining to the Person and attributes of Christ. True Christology in the soul is the doctrine of Who and What Jesus Christ is. (Colossians 3:16)

[28] Soteriology is those doctrines pertaining to salvation, particularly those of redemption, reconciliation, propitiation, imputation, justification, positional sanctification, and the doctrine of the Last Judgment.

prevent this soul sewage problem by encouraging each other to be faithful to study the Word.

> Iron sharpens iron. So one man sharpens another [motivates the other to the spiritual life] (Proverbs 27:17).

God has made the combined strength of husband and wife much greater than their strength as two individuals. They should take full advantage of this grace gift.

Counseling

A husband and wife who are learning accurate Bible teaching and applying those principles consistently don't need anyone to counsel them. They turn inward to the Bible truth in their souls by which God has made them spiritually self-sustaining.

The mature believer has spiritual self-esteem, not human self-esteem which is a favorite concept among psychologists and counselors and is not compatible with the plan designed by God. The mature believer understands that everything he has, is, and ever will be, comes as a grace gift from God. He esteems God, the Creator and Grantor of all blessings, not himself, the undeserving recipient.

His self-confidence is related to personal worth because of Jesus Christ's love for him. He is aware that knowing and applying God's truth can change his life. Even more every believer is a priest (II Peter 2:9) and represents himself before God. A believer who understands this divine principle learns Bible doctrine under his pastor and then uses the truth in his soul to handle problems as they arise. He knows, understands, and believes the fundamental doctrines of marriage as well as God's expectations of him as both an individual and as a spouse. Such a believer no longer needs anyone to lean on other than God.

Wise Counsel

It is true that the Bible is our counsel and we are not to depend on psychologists. We must always remember that those who advise us have Old Sin Natures just as we do and their advice can lead to confusion and misdirection. But there are those who are mature believers and can be turned to for encouragement and support. The pastor, as a shepherd, can encourage, exhort and help the couple regain their spiritual bearing. We have seen that every believer is

a priest and as such God has given him the ability to solve his own problems through the Bible doctrine in his soul. But the Bible also tells us we are to seek out and accept wise counsel.

> The way of a fool seems right to him, but a wise man listens to advice (Proverbs 12:15).

> Listen to advice and accept instruction, and in the end you will be wise. Many are the plans in a man's heart, but it is the LORD's purpose that prevails (Proverbs 19:20-21).

> Then they [older women] can urge the younger women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands, so that no one will malign the word of God (Titus 2:4-5).

The Ill Effects of Counseling on Marriage

When psychology or counseling replaces application of the truth of God's Word, the consequences are enormous and can be fatal to any marriage. The first problem with marriage counseling is that it invades and destroys privacy, which God mandates for both the spiritual life and marriage. Moses in the Old Testament declared,

> For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother and shall cleave [Hebrew: *dabaq*: intimate association in the form of sexual intercourse] to his wife, and they shall become as one flesh (Genesis 2:24).

Couples need privacy in order to form and establish their family; therefore, God orders them to leave their parents and begin their own family without outside intrusion. When a husband and wife go to a counselor, they bring intrusion on themselves. They are bound to empty themselves to their counselor. They will probably tell him how often they kiss and have sex, how much income each brings home, how often they talk to their parents, and other private personal details. Without privacy, a marriage loses its intimacy and its oneness.

God in His matchless grace has prepared a solution for every problem that can exist in marriage; however, pastor-teachers have to

be willing to study the Word of God and explain biblical solutions so that every believer-priest can apply them to his life. The Author and Maker of marriage is God; and only He has the solutions to marital problems. Couples who neglect their spiritual life, are creating their own misery, and destroying their own marriage.

People often look for easy, fast solutions when problems arise in marriage. No quick fix exists. It takes time to tear down bad habits and attitudes and rebuild new ones based on God's Word. Our attitude toward the infallible and unshakable Word of God determines whether we enjoy or merely endure our marriage.

Medical Advice

The only time a husband and wife should seek outside advice is for medical purposes. Some mental and physical problems can be successfully treated through medicine, and such treatment should always be sought.

Anxiety, excessive shyness, fear[29], and panic are not always medical disorders but are often manifestations of carnality. Believers who allow their emotions to control them have too great an awareness of their own existence. They forget Who is in control of their lives. Emotional sins and their effects can be conquered permanently only through Bible doctrine in the soul.

[29] Everyone feels a momentary physiological spurt of fear in unexpected or unexplained dangers. The fear God despises is the one based on lack of confidence in Him.

Chapter Fourteen

Glorification of God in Marriage

Everyone begins their spiritual life with garbage in the soul. This garbage, which is produced by the Old Sin Nature, interferes with with correct thinking in the spiritual arena; therefore, the primary objective of a husband and wife should be to replace this garbage with truth from sound biblical teaching.

Too many believers are selective when learning doctrine. This means that they turn their ears off when biblical teaching is not related to their immediate needs or disagrees with their preconceived ideas. This approach to the Word of God is dangerous! We must learn every truth that God provides. We may not need it today, but certainly we will need it in the future. The more of the infallible Word of God that we learn, the more we increase the amount of biblical knowledge in our souls and the potential for correct thinking, good decisions, and correct application is created. When it comes to the application of Bible doctrine, the Holy Spirit takes over.

> Then he answered and said to me, "This is the word of the Lord to Zerubbabel [in your case, to a husband] saying, 'Not by might [energy of the mouth or biceps] nor by power [through intimidation of your wife], but by My Spirit,' says the Lord of hosts. What are you, O great mountains [the obstacles to the enjoyment of your marriage]? Before Zerubbabel you will become a plain [a simple issue]; and he will bring forth the capstone with a shout of 'Grace! Grace to it!'" (Zechariah 4:6-7).

A husband and wife with Bible knowledge in their souls see the mountain as surmountable. They see the molehill as just that, a molehill. God the Holy Spirit gives them the power to apply truth wisely. They examine their lives through the mirror in their souls. Whenever they commit a sin, they confess immediately, thereby utilizing the only solution for restoration to fellowship with the Holy Spirit (I John 1:9). They recognize the sin immediately and confess it to God the Father quickly so that they are seldom without the filling of the Holy Spirit.

They understand that they can't leave behind an unacknowledged sin, only an acknowledged one, and that every unacknowledged sin attracts other sins. They view themselves and each other in the light of the second birth, not the first birth. They perceive each other through the clarifying agency of the water of the Word.

God's commandments are indelibly engraved on their souls. They dress according to their station as members of the Royal Family of God.

> Therefore, as elect ones of God, dress appropriately. Put on gracious behavior, compassion, humility of mind, patience, and perseverance. Bear with one another and forgive one another even if anyone has a reason to complain against another. Even as the Lord forgave you, so you must also do. And as a finishing touch, put on virtue love [*agape*], the belt that completes your virtue (Colossians 3:12-14).

Glorifying God in the Angelic Conflict

At the moment Satan was sentenced to the Lake of Fire by the Supreme Court of Heaven, he cried out that God was unfair and that no one would follow God's mandates unless He heaped blessings on them. Satan's purpose in such blasphemy was to prove that he himself had been falsely sentenced to the Lake of Fire. If no one worshipped God through free will, then Satan didn't have to worship Him either; and, consequently, his sentence to the Lake of Fire was based on the false premise that God is unfair. In response, God created mankind and allowed the first man and woman to fail so that there would be ultimately be billions of people in the world. God gave every human being the very thing that caused the downfall of Satan and the fallen angels, namely free will.

The Bible records spiritual giants, like Job, Abraham, Moses, King David, Daniel, the apostle Paul, and other heroes, who glorified God in their lives. If we look at them closely we see their flaws — but they were faithful and God used them greatly. This gives us hope! Every believer has the potential for such greatness, though few have used their free will to glorify God to the maximum.

When the heroes mentioned in the Bible reached spiritual maturity, each was called by God to the witness stand in the Supreme

Court of Heaven. Satan, the accuser, brutally and decisively cross-examined them in all facets of their lives. Through their God-centered lives, these doctrinal heroes testified to the righteousness, justice, and unfailing love of God. They testified before the members of the Trinity and the elect angels that Satan and all fallen angels used their free will to rebel against God. Their testimony through the execution of their spiritual lives put Satan's case to rest. Satan's defeat is magnified by every such invisible hero. The case continues through the rebuttal phase of Satan's appeal trial, which takes place during the Church Age. Each of us has the potential to become a witness for God, even the greatest witness as a corporate testimony with our beloved spouse.

With the beginning of the Church Age, God instituted Christian marriage and made Christian husbands and wives the foremost witnesses for His prosecution of Satan and all fallen angels; therefore, Christian marriage is the major battleground in Christendom. Unfortunately, millions of believers are don't know of the angelic conflict itself and of the importance of Christian marriage in its resolution. Only a few have recognized this battle between Satan and God and have determined to utilize God's grace provision, namely perception and application of Bible doctrine and the enabling power of the Holy Spirit to glorify God in every circumstance in their marriage. Have you recognized that your marriage is a battleground? Are you bringing glory to our gracious and loving Father? Will you hear the following solemn words from the Lord?

> Well done, good and faithful servant, you were faithful [at the witness stand] with a few things. I will put you in charge of many things. Enter into the joy of your Master (Matthew 25:23).

At the Last Judgment, every believer will stand before Christ and receive either rewards for faithfulness in their the spiritual life or realize their loss of reward (Philippians 2:16). Will you and your spouse stand together before Christ and receive the ultimate rewards for your successful corporate testimony in Satan's trial? Can any success in the world be more important than receiving that accolade from God?

Of course, your answers are a matter between you and the Lord. It is wise to remember that you will have to give your answer at the Judgment Seat of Christ, and no excuse for failure will have any credibility with our Supreme Judge.

Spiritual Tools to be a Winner in Marriage

As believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, you and your spouse have three tools that, if used, will lead to a corporate testimony and a dazzling array of rewards: Scripture, the Holy Spirit, and confession.

1. **Scripture:**

> Therefore, be on the alert, remembering that night and day for a period of three years I did not cease to admonish each one of you with tears. And now I commend you to God and the word of His grace [Scripture], which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance [eternal reward] among all those who are sanctified (Acts 20:31-32).

The apostle Paul began his admonition to the church at Ephesus by telling them to "be on the alert." Why were they to be on the alert? Or better yet, why must you be on the alert?

> Hold fast to what you have in order that no one [including your wife, husband or Satan] take your crown (Revelation 3:11b).

The Lord Jesus Christ Himself commanded every believer to hold fast to his spiritual life. We don't know the nature of the eternal crown that will be rewarded to those who hold fast; not every believer will receive it! Thus, the apostle Paul reminded the Ephesians to be on guard, to be ever on the alert. For three years he had taught them the Word of God with tears and we too should take it seriously. Paul recalled this unseen but real battle of the angelic conflict as he wrote,

> For the weapons we use in our [spiritual] warfare [through the Holy Spirit — the weapons of thinking] are not of the flesh but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses [Satan's multifaceted systems of false thinking], assaulting and demolishing cosmic thought [imaginations,

sublimations, man's means of escaping reality], and every obstacle of arrogance against the objective knowledge of God, even making a prisoner of every thought [every human viewpoint] to the obedience [authority] of Jesus Christ, holding in readiness [doctrine available in the soul] to punish all deviation from obedience [soul revolt because of deficiency of doctrine]. . . (II Corinthians 10:4-6a).

The weapons of the mature husband and wife are those of the mind, their mental attitude. Their obedience to Christ is fulfilled when their thinking becomes the thinking of Christ, then and only then do they glorify God to the maximum through a corporate testimony. Only then can they successfully challenge the human viewpoint of Satan's world, the world in which they live. Only then are they able to successfully go from an understanding of the reality of their position in Satan's world to the Word of God and back to reality. Their God-centered thought patterns motivate, empower, and strengthen them. Because of the truth in their souls, they know "that all things work together for good," not for everyone but for them because they love God. They cast their cares on the Lord. They know the doctrine of God's Divine Attributes and apply it. They understand the principles of Christology and apply them. Because biblical thinking has first place in their minds, happiness and peace, power and strength encompass them. Such Christians cannot be defeated — Yes, they still sin, but confess quickly, reorient themselves to God's plan and continue devoting themselves to the study of God's Word.

Paul realized the importance of God's truth that he stayed three years in Ephesus so that he could help the believers there learn the deeper truths of the Scriptures for the glorification of God in the devil's world. Then, he assigned a pastor-teacher to continue their instruction. Similarly, a husband and wife should learn accurate Bible teaching consistently, not just for months or years but for a lifetime. God has provided recordings, literature, and face-to-face public teaching as well as webcasts on the internet as a means of proclaiming His truth. Regardless of the means, they must learn and apply, trust and obey, becoming ever watchful for Satan's crafty intrusion into their marriage. Immediately, they can detect and deflect his lies because their

souls are filled with God's Word. They are equipped to follow the example of Jesus who, when he was tempted, combatted Satan's lies with Scripture.

2. **The Holy Spirit:**

"Not by might [human viewpoint] nor by power [energy of the flesh], but by My Spirit," says the Lord (Zechariah 4:6b).

The plan of God, including marriage, is divinely orchestrated and requires a divine power for its execution; therefore, at the moment of faith alone in Christ alone, God gives His Holy Spirit to every believer (I John 3:24). The husband and wife who aspire to glorify God recognize that their Old Sin Natures and the Holy Spirit are in conflict with one another for control of their souls. Paul wrote,

For, you see, the Old Sin Nature rises up in protest against the Spirit, and the Spirit makes war against the Old Sin Nature. They are constantly opposed to each other with the result that you do not continue doing what things that you want to do [obedience] (Galatians 5:17).

The souls of a husband and wife in Christian marriage are the primary battleground in the angelic conflict. Their volition determines which side wins in their marriage. The Old Sin Nature controls their souls when they succumb to temptation, thus grieving or quenching the Holy Spirit. Grieving is a one-time sin followed by confession. Quenching is perpetual carnality without confession. Any believer who quenches or grieves the Holy Spirit violates God's command to be filled with the Spirit (Ephesians 5:18b).

A husband and wife who are filled with the Holy Spirit know that the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love [agape, virtue love], joy [sharing the happiness of God, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. (Galatians 5:22).

When they consistently remain under the control of the Holy Spirit, growing to spiritual maturity together, they exhibit the fruit or profits of the Spirit when they exhibit the fruit, they know with certainty that they are filled with the Holy Spirit. When God the

Holy Spirit controls their life and marriage, the character of Christ is produced. The husband understands that he can't love his wife the way God intends unless the Holy Spirit is in control of his soul. The wife knows that she can't respect her husband unless the Holy Spirit fills her soul. Both husband and wife clearly understand that once the Holy Spirit is operational in their souls, they will have the humility to continue loving when one of them fails, the integrity to remain faithful regardless of any temptations, the generosity to always show kindness to one another, and the self-discipline to study the Bible together every day.

True happiness is the monopoly of the Holy Spirit; therefore, a husband and wife can have no lasting and sustaining happiness unless the Holy Spirit rules their souls. The apostle Paul put it this way:

> For it is God who works in you [through His Spirit] to will and to act according to His good purpose (Philippians 2:13).

3. **Confession**

If you continue to accept the objective evaluation of the mirror of the Word of truth, you will become a mature believer.

> Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith [in tune with His Word]. Test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you — unless, of course, you fail the test (II Corinthians 13:5).

Pause to examine your marriage and yourselves to see whether your spiritual life is in tune with the divine plan. If you fail this test, you have the option to reevaluate your life with regard to the plan of God and resume from the point where you fell short. Confession is your first responsibility. Diligence in learning God's Word is the second.

> Not that I have already attained all this [occupation with Christ and spiritual maturity], or have already reached the objective [maturity], but I keep on pursuing in order that I may overtake the objective for which I also was [pursued and] overtaken [seized and held] by Christ Jesus. Fellow believers, I do not evaluate myself to have taken hold of it

[spiritual maturity, glorification of God to the maximum] yet. But one thing I concentrate on: Forgetting those things which are behind [both successes and failures] and straining toward those things which are ahead, I press on [keep advancing] toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus [union in Christ as the basis for spiritual royalty] (Philippians 3:12-14).

Your objective in life must always be to maintain your spiritual growth through continued study and application of God's Word. Confession is the key to advancing in the spiritual life, for if you are out of fellowship with God, you can't learn His Truth. Feeling guilty about a sin is a sin in itself, the sin of arrogance. Once a sin is confessed, you must forget it as God has forgotten it. You must not become subjective about your sins and failures and lose the perspective of your purpose on earth, to glorify God. Certainly, you must forget the sins of your spouse as well.

You don't have to entertain and dwell on every thought that comes into your mind. Rather be discriminating and focus on:

Whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute: If there is any thing excellent and worthy of praise, dwell on it (Philippians 4:8).

The apostle Paul clearly had an objective, namely to glorify God to the maximum. Is this your objective as well? What could be more important than glorifying the One with whom you will be spending all eternity? What in the world can your spouse do to you that you cannot forgive? What is more important to you — to get even with your spouse who has wronged you or to glorify Him who hung on the Cross as a substitute for you? What could be greater than pressing on together toward the goal of a corporate testimony?

You, husbands, can you honestly claim that the love of Christ resides in your souls, a love that is always patient and kind, that does not envy or boast, that isn't rude or self-seeking, that isn't easily angered, that doesn't keep records of wrongs, but always protects — a love that never fails? Why do you try to prove to your wife that she is wrong and you are right? Even if you win the battle, what difference does it make? Will your victory over your wife bring you closer to God?

> Nevertheless let each individual [husband] among you also love his own wife even as he loves himself (Ephesians 5:33a).

Remember that every husband is *commanded* to love his wife. It boils down to this: A husband cannot live in harmony with a wife he does not understand; therefore, through study of what the Bible says on this topic, he must learn to understand his wife, love her, and treat her in grace. Remember also that humility is the basis of all true love.

You, wives, can you truly say that you are humble? Does the humility which our Lord Jesus Christ displayed with regard to the plan of the Father in His incarnation radiate through you? Do you joyfully submit to the authority of your husband? Do you respect him even though he may not deserve your respect? Or do you undermine his authority, either subtly or blatantly? Do you harbor thoughts of superiority over him? Do you find it demeaning to be under his leadership? In other words, do you honestly recognize that God has given your husband authority over you? The Bible takes the wife's role as a responder seriously. The command that she be under the authority of her husband in all things is a divine command; therefore, it is non-negotiable. She abides by it, or she suffers.

Do you consider yourself a virtuous wife? Do the principles we studied in Proverbs 31:10-31 apply to you? Can your husband truly trust you no matter the temptations you face? The answers to these questions are a matter between you and the Lord.

Husbands and wives, can you honestly say that you are glorifying God in your marriage? Know that if you are failing in marriage, undoubtedly you are failing in your spiritual life, for you cannot glorify God in anything if you fail to glorify Him in your marriage.

The Ultimate Question

Now that you have been exposed to the truth, do you understand why marriage should be revered? Can you begin to fathom why the Holy Spirit used the writer of the book of Hebrews to pen these solemn words:

> Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled (Hebrews 13:4).

Can you understand why the Bible commands a husband to "love his wife just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her?" (Ephesians 5:25) Literally, "Husbands, acquire the very love that Christ had before He went to the Cross and died as a Substitute for the future Church." Can you comprehend why the Bible mandates a wife to be "subject to her own husband as to the Lord?" (Ephesians 5:22). In other words, women should see to it that they develop, see to it that they develop Christ's humility before entering into marriage.

> To sum it all up, be all of one mind, having compassion for one another. Be harmonious [coalescence of souls in marriage], sympathetic [sensitive toward your spouse], feeling brotherly love and humility, not giving back evil for evil or insult for insult, but on the contrary giving blessing instead because you were called for the very purpose that you might inherit blessing [both in time and in eternity yet to come] (I Peter 3:8-9).

After all, the only reason God left us behind after salvation was to glorify Him. We can glorify Him only if we learn His commandments and follow them.

To sum it all up, be of one mind . . . (I Peter 3:8a).

If you had only two minutes left before you knew you would depart to see your Lord Jesus Christ face to face, would you wish to go back and start your marriage over because you've failed to glorify the Lord in it? If so, the moment to start reinvigorating and revitalizing your marriage is now! When you have utilized God's grace provision and glorified God in your marriage, Satan is put to shame, and eternal rewards await you and your spouse when you face your Lord in Heaven.

Final Principles

1. If you flee fornication as God commands (Ephesians 5:3), you will avoid a grave and lasting threat to your happiness.
2. If, while single, you remain a virgin, no memories of past sexual sins will be carried into your marriage along with the root of bitterness inherent in them.

3. If you are single, have never been married, are growing in grace, and are a virgin (male or female), maintain your status quo. Use your time to grow toward spiritual maturity through Bible study so you will be prepared for God to introduce your right spouse to you in His right time.
4. If you are married, did not have premarital sex, have not committed adultery (mental or physical), have not been married before, and are growing in grace, you can be certain that you are married to your right man or right woman.

   If when you marry, you consistently execute the spiritual life, you will never have a reason for divorce. Once married — whoever that may be — they are now your right person.
5. If you consistently confess and learn and apply Bible truth, you will find joy in fulfilling God's command to obey your husband or to love your wife as Christ loved the Church.
6. If you are consistent in making decisions based on Bible doctrine in your soul, you will have no regrets in time or eternity.
7. If you and your spouse reach spiritual maturity together, you will have a corporate testimony in Satan's appeal trial and will receive the highest blessings possible in time and eternity.

Heavenly Father,

We pause and humbly pray that this book will serve as a source of challenge so that we may fulfill Your reason for leaving us on earth, namely to glorify You to the maximum. May we come to the full knowledge that marriage is a battleground and thus be vigilant as the battle rages on all sides, threatening to consume us. May we as husbands and wives remain focused in our spiritual lives. May the love which our Lord Jesus Christ displayed on the Cross of Calvary motivate us to fulfill the divine commands in marriage, namely "Husbands, love your wives as Christ also loved the church," and "Wives, be subject to your husbands as unto the Lord." Through learning and applying the truths of the Bible may we become more tolerant of one another and thus glorify Thee to the maximum. This we ask in Christ's Name. Amen.

> Now to Him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us, to Him be glory in the Church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever! Amen (Ephesians 3:20-21).

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Grace Evangelistic Ministries is a Bible based nondenominational missionary organization. We are not a church. GEM was founded in 1997 by Moses C. Onwubiko. Evangelism is our primary goal and we take the grace gospel of Jesus Christ around the world anywhere God opens a door. GEM evangelizes the lost, educates pastors and encourages believers. Rev. Moses has spoken in over 100 countries around the world in Africa, Asia, (including the Middle East), Australia, Europe and North and South America. He has published many books and tracts which are distributed free of charge. The gospel tract Riding the Death Train has been translated into many languages and received enthusiastically around the world.

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