

faithful Christian has hope of eternal life in which even the effects of aging are reversed. There is also hope in medical breakthroughs that will help us live longer, more productive, and happier lives here.

We tout endurance in the work place, in sports, in education and research, as well as, in most other areas of life. Why not realize that endurance of a few rough spots is also necessary in marriage?

It is always hardest to see yourself, and it is now in this phase, the golden years of marriage, that the author finds himself. For this reason there are probably many things that were missed in these pages. Many things may be added or removed in later editions.

The years have passed, though I am not sure when. If anything endures in my mind until my life here is over it will be love – love of the Lord, love for my wife, Geil, and for our sons, their wives, and our grandchildren.

Marriage: Honorable Among All by Wes Dawson

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Dedication

This book is dedicated to the couple
who requested it.

After studying several of the lessons,
they decided against marriage at that time,
a wise decision that may have saved many heartaches.
May they always seek the counsel of God's Word
throughout all their life.

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time it may require a bit of extra effort on the part of both to overlook the shortness of temper and irritability that these problems create. Prayer for the Lord's help is always recommended in all things (Philippians 4:6-7). Little reminders of the love you share should always be given on your “good days” even if it is not a good day for your mate. Such attention might turn his or her day around and will certainly help to lessen the number of “bad days” you have. The old rule never go to sleep angry at each other still applies (Ephesians 4:26-27).

“Love does not envy...” Envy has no place in a marriage whether it is new or old. A better memory, better hearing, better health, and greater success are always to be desired, but should not be the source of envy, especially not in marriage.

“Love does not parade itself, is not puffed up...” If you are the possessor of some of the better and greater attributes in a marriage, be sure to give your mate the benefit of your success without making him or her feel as though it is some great gift for which they should be eternally grateful. As with giving yourself a sacrifice in the service of the Lord it is your reasonable service. Most likely if you possess greater skill in one field your mate possesses it in another. Likewise, accept their efforts to help with grace. You are one. What benefits your mate benefits you.

“Love...Bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.” Some of us mellow with age, some of us just get cranky. If your mate is one of the “cranky” number, try to find things that help mellow him or her. Attention to the little things can make a big difference. If you have to bear most of the load, remember it is for a good cause – your love for each other.

Continue to believe in each other. If you were loved then, you are loved now. Signs to the contrary are purely the result of age not a failure of love.

“Hope,” so the saying goes, “springs eternal.” Certainly the

Golden Years Together

One of the most beautiful things on earth is a man and woman still in love with each other after fifty or more years together. A couple still as inseparable as the day they were married if not more so. As Solomon once said, “Let thy fountain be blessed: and rejoice with the wife of thy youth. Let her be as the loving hind and pleasant roe; let her breasts satisfy thee at all times; and be thou ravished always with her love.” (Proverbs 5:18-19).

Likewise, one of the saddest sights is a couple splitting after many years together. The children are all gone and they no longer have anything in common. They have grown apart.

Contact and care for one another must be maintained. When children change the marriage into a full fledged family, they should not be the excuse for failing to continue the loving attention of husband and wife. Parents who love each other tend to love their children. Parents who allow small children all the attention tend to pay little attention to older children. They are like the person who thinks puppies or kittens are cute, but hates dogs and cats. Time does not destroy love (1 Corinthians 13:8, NKJV).

Perhaps when the last of the children are gone, it would be a good time to review not only the good things our marriage has given us, but also the description Paul gives of love (1 Corinthians 13:4-7 NKJV).

“Love suffers long and is kind...”

By the time the kids have moved out, husband and wife may be hard of hearing, in poor health, and have a failing memory. These are the normal signs of old age. They certainly require us to be longsuffering and exercise kindness. If only one experiences these problems understanding from the other usually smooths the road, but when both develop one or more of the problems at the same

Introduction

While planning their wedding, a young couple in the church where I was preaching approached me with a request. Would it be possible to present a series of lessons from the Bible on making marriage work?

First, I realized that although I had been happily married to the same woman for almost 38 years, I am not and never will be an expert on marriage. In spite of all those who claim to be marriage counselors, even those with a fairly good success record, I wonder if any human being ever can be a true expert. The problems and triumphs of marriage are as varied as the people involved. No two marriages are exactly the same.

After thinking for quite a while, a realization dawned that the request itself carried the answer to my dilemma. Though I am certainly no expert, I know One who is. He created man, woman, and marriage. There will never be a greater expert on the union He established. The Bible offers His wisdom on this subject, just as it does on all subjects important to our wellbeing.

Therefore, I offer this small volume of lessons first taught on Wednesday evenings at the Skyline church of Christ in the spring of 2003. I pray that it will be of use in producing all the happiness possible in every marriage touched by it, whether the couple be newlywed or partners of many years.

- Wes Dawson

Defining Marriage

While giving a series of admonitions to the Hebrew Christians, Paul drops in this reminder about marriage. “Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge.” (Hebrews 13:4 NKJV).

To the best of my knowledge, there is not a culture on Earth that does not approve of marriage. They may allow people to live together in a sexual relationship outside marriage, but they have nothing against such relationships being legitimized in marriage. Today gays seek to legitimize their relationships by marriage, insisting that states pass laws to allow such. Even those who disparage the legal state of matrimony as just a piece of paper, will admit there is really nothing wrong with marriage for those who want it.

Although the above facts prove as Paul said that “marriage is honorable among all,” they also prove that marriage is not well understood. In this chapter we will attempt to define marriage according to the Word of God.

Why God Should Define Marriage

People often make the mistake of believing that marriage is defined by the state or nation. This is not surprising because most states take it upon themselves to regulate it. This came about partly because of the union of church and state under Roman Catholicism, and partly because it provided a convenient means of raising revenue through licenses. The revenue also accounts for the state's readiness to grant divorce decrees, a subject we will take up later.

The state did not create marriage and has no right to define or

the rod and save his soul from death.” (Proverbs 23:13-14, NIV).

This does not mean to beat the child black and blue. God did not mean that a child would not die regardless of how hard he or she was beaten. Be firm but reasonable. Let discipline come from love. “He who spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is careful to discipline him.” (Proverbs 13:24, NIV).

The Child Is Not You!

Remember, the child is not you. It is not its brother or sister. Each child is an individual.

One of the worst mistakes a parent can make is trying to turn a child into a carbon of themselves, or into what they wanted to be. Be aware of a child's personal desires and ambitions. As long as they are honorable, encourage them. Trying to turn a son into a pro football player when all he wants to do is program computers is a mistake. Trying to make your daughter into another Julia Child when she wants to fix cars will bring only pain.

Don't expect one child to be like another. The worst thing a parent can do is make comparisons with another child. Learn each child's abilities and build on them.

Children in the Wind

When Paul advised “that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine”, he was speaking of the spiritual growth of Christians. Nevertheless, the same principle applies to our physical children. When Dad says one thing and Mom says the opposite children are tossed about, wondering which rule to follow, or setting one parent against the other in order to get their own way. The word of God says, “Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.” (Ephesians 6:4, NIV). It is hard for children to obey their parents in the Lord (Ephesians 6:1), unless they both speak the same thing.

Discipline

Discipline is not a joy for parent or child, but it is a necessity. The Bible tells us, “...you have forgotten that word of encouragement that addresses you as sons: 'My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, because the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son.' Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father? If you are not disciplined (and everyone undergoes discipline), then you are illegitimate children and not true sons. Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of our spirits and live! Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness. No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.” (Hebrews 12:5-11).

Do not discipline a child when you are angry. Anger clouds reason. Proverbs tells us “Do not withhold discipline from a child; if you punish him with the rod, he will not die. Punish him with

regulate it in a way that is not in accord with the law of God (Acts 5:29). God created marriage (Genesis 2:18-25). He alone has the right to define it.

God's Definition

It is not between man or woman and beast (Leviticus 18:23). It is not between two men or two women (Romans 1:21-32). It is between a man and a woman. “Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain (two) shall be one flesh?” (Matthew 19:4-5).

Contrary to popular belief, marriage is not “just a piece of paper”. It requires three things. 1) The intention to be married – leave, cleave, and be one (Mark 10:6-8). 2) A contract of marriage that required a written release even under the law of Moses (Matthew 19:7-9). 3) The consummation of the marriage. Paul makes it clear that the main purpose of marriage is the fulfillment of our natural needs and urges (1 Corinthians 7:2-5).

It Is A Lifetime Contract

There is no easy out from marriage regardless of what civil law may proclaim. God does not recognize “no fault divorces”. Divorce for any reason other than fornication will force your partner into adultery in order to fulfill his or her natural desires, making you guilty of putting a stumbling block in their way. It will also make you guilty of adultery if you marry again (Matthew 19:7-9).

The disciples recognized the gravity of the situation when they said, “If the case of the man be so with his wife, it is not good to marry.” (Matthew 19:10).

Paul also recognized that a man or woman would have a lot to live up to when he said, “Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me: It is good for a man not to touch a woman. Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband.” (1 Corinthians 7:1-2). In other words, unless you are sure you can live up to your contract, don't marry. There is no escape clause.

“The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth; but if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord.” (1 Corinthians 7:39). This is the only circumstance in the New Testament that requires a Christian to marry a Christian, although it would be advisable for all Christians to do so, as we shall see later.

If children are evidence of the love that already exists, they will help the marriage grow stronger. They will be like good cement holding together blocks already in place. They will be a wonderful blessing. “Sons are a heritage from the LORD, children a reward from him. Like arrows in the hands of a warrior; are sons born in one's youth. Blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them....” (Psalms 127:3-5, NIV).

Children born “to save a marriage” are instead likely to be the storm that destroys it. Parents who are already having problems will use the children as pawns in the war with one another. This results in the children feeling responsible for the problems which were not their fault. Such children have a low opinion of themselves and wind up in all kinds of trouble.

Counting the Cost

Preparation should be made for children. Paul said, “children should not have to save up for their parents, but parents for their children.” (2 Corinthians 12:14, NIV). This is another area in which we should count the cost. Most of us don't. The average cost of raising a child born in 2003 to the age of eighteen is estimated at \$380,000. That doesn't include college!

With the rising cost of college, more and more young people are providing their own tuition. This is a wonderful way for young people to learn responsibility, but parents should provide as much as possible for a child's start in life.

Someone has suggested starting a savings account with a dollar per week (more if possible) as soon as the child is born. This would be less than a thousand dollars actually saved, but depending on interest paid to the account could amount to a tidy sum by the time the child is eighteen.

Chapter 9

Children

Children can be a blessing to a marriage or the beginning of destruction depending on the parents. A child does not choose its parents, therefore it is not to be blamed for marital problems. Be sure the marriage is on solid footing before children arrive.

The Problem of Unwed Parents

I am always appalled when I hear the words, “they had to get married.” First of all it tells me that the couple ignored Paul's warning. “To avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband.” (1 Corinthians 7:2). Second it tells me that they may be making a second mistake by trying to cover that sin. Some marriages, that come about strictly because a child is on the way, do work. The majority end in divorce. God did not intend for children to be reared by a single parent, neither did he intend a hasty marriage to cover up sin. It is better to repent of the sin. Welcome the child which had nothing to do with the wrong committed, and give the possibility of marriage serious thought in light of God's word.

In the 1960's at the high school where I grew up, it became fashionable for girls to “trap” their favorite male into marriage by pregnancy. None of those marriages lasted. Young women should think again if they consider setting such a “trap”, and young men should not be enticed into acts that would produce the situation.

Can Children Save a Marriage?

Children can be the cement that holds a marriage together, but they can not be the entire building. Some couples have children only because they believe that children will save a failing marriage. Nothing could be farther from the truth!

Chapter 2

Choosing A Partner

In Bible times, and in many eastern countries today, a man and woman did not have the opportunity to make a choice. Their marriage partner was chosen by their parents, sometimes even before they were born. Marriages were made to gain property or station and to cement alliances between families and countries. Hence the older women were to teach the younger women to love their husbands (Titus 2:4), and husbands were commanded to love their wives, “and be not bitter against them.” (Colossians 3:19).

Choose Prayerfully

If there was ever a time for prayer, this is it. You are making a lifetime commitment. As Paul said, “In nothing be anxious; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 4:6-7). Pray for what you want in a mate, and then choose accordingly. If you are already married pray for your mate and live an example before him or her rather than nagging (1 Peter 3:1-7).

Don't Depend On Changing Your Spouse

One of the saddest scenes that I have ever beheld was a wife severely beaten by her husband. Someone asked if she did not have a clue that he would be abusive before they were married. She replied that he had gotten jealous and roughed her up a couple of times while they were dating, but that she thought it was sweet that he “loved” her so much. “Besides,” she said, “I thought he would change after we were married.”

Marriage seldom changes a person for the better. Neither is there much of a chance that you will be able to reform your mate.

Marriage brings a whole new set of problems which the single person has never faced. Under ideal circumstances the husband seeks to please the wife and the wife seeks to please her husband (1 Corinthians 7:32-34). Since both are human and the world is imperfect, ideal conditions seldom prevail.

A person who was jealous and abusive before marriage will probably become more possessive, jealous, and abusive. Remember the words of the wise man, “jealousy is the rage of a man: therefore he will not spare in the day of vengeance.” (Proverbs 6:34). A person who drinks or does drugs before marriage will use them as a crutch when the going gets rough in marriage (Proverbs 23:29-35). If he or she spends money like water on dates, it will also happen after you are married. If your date hates kids or acts childish, that's not likely to change. A person who is unreliable and lazy will probably remain so. If he or she does not get along with Mom and Dad, don't expect much cooperation in marriage. Chances are they only got married to be “on their own”. Whatever his or her habits, can you stand them the rest of your life?

Remember that God allows an end to marriage for only one reason (Matthew 19:9), and cruelty whether mental or physical is not it!

Know the person you marry. Stick with it once you are married and be willing to do whatever it takes to make it work!

A Difference Of Faith

A difference of faith is probably responsible for more broken marriages than anything other than finances and cruelty. The Bible does not prohibit marriage outside the church except for those whose mate has died (1 Corinthians 7:39). However, it is wise to marry someone who shares your faith.

First of all, not all religions regard marriage as a lifetime commitment and not all religions demand monogamy.

Always budget a reasonable amount of personal spending money. You will most likely spend it and more if you do not.

If there is a short fall of funds, pay necessities first; food, housing, clothes, transportation to work and back. Trim the luxuries. Drop cable or satellite in favor of an antenna. Drop the cell phone when your contract runs out or cut back to the lowest cost plan. A prepaid phone is best. This way there is no bill to pay at an inconvenient time. Eat out less or select cheaper meals at lower cost restaurants. Eat less expensive foods at home, but make sure they are foods your family will eat. Food thrown away is no bargain. Watch for sales on things you use, but never buy something just because its on sale. Coupons may be useful, but the store brand may be just as good and less expensive than name brands even after the coupon. Unfortunately we have come to consider many of these things and others necessities when they are not. Don't buy things you do not need and will seldom use. If you do, you soon become a collector of things rather than a wise steward.

Obtaining a solid financial standing will be easier if you begin marriage with a good job that you like, a giving spirit, no debt, a determination to save where possible, and a reasonable budget. Strange as it may seem to the average man, most women prefer security over luxury. You may want to give her the moon, but she probably prefers knowing that she and the children will never go hungry, or lack clothes and a place to live.

popular rationalization being, “you don't owe a debt if you make payments on time.” Just try telling that to your creditor! You still owe the balance no matter how timely your payments are.

I do not believe that Paul is saying that debt is sinful, simply that it is not the best idea for a Christian. As Shakespeare put it, “Neither a borrower, nor a lender be; for loan oft loses both itself and friend, and borrowing dulls the edge of husbandry.” (*Hamlet*, Act 1, Scene 3). Bad debts have destroyed many friendships, and borrowing causes us to buy things we could do without.

Have you ever asked yourself how some bums can seem so happy in spite of their situation? The answer is simple, they have no debt! If you are searching for that same peace of mind, avoid debt.

The American public has been sold on debt by lenders and credit card companies. It is their product. It is their means of making money.

If you have no debt, do not go into debt. If you are in debt, begin now to pay it off. Make a list of debts in ascending order. The smallest balance first to the largest balance last. Pay off the smallest debt first. Pay only the minimum payment on all others until it is paid in full. If possible raise extra money to pay on it, by having a yard sale or engaging in some other honorable enterprise. When that debt is paid, instead of spending the extra money, begin paying the amount of that payment on the next debt in addition to its regular payment.

Make a Budget

Make a written budget, with emphasis on the word written, and stick to it. It is too easy to tamper with a budget that is kept only in the head. This is exactly what the Lord was talking about when he said, “For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it?” (Luke 14:28).

Secondly, a person who is extremely zealous in his or her religion may demand that you change or stop practicing your own faith. Such a situation can become very unpleasant for a faithful Christian. Jesus must come first (Luke 14:26; Acts 5:29). Paul has this advice for those married to someone of a different faith or with no faith. “But to the rest speak I, not the Lord: If any brother hath a wife that believeth not, and she be pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away. And the woman which hath an husband that believeth not, and if he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him. For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy. But if the unbelieving depart, let him depart. A brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases: but God hath called us to peace. For what knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband? or how knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save thy wife? (1 Corinthians 7:12-16).

The third problem is the children. It is no accident that the Catholic Church demands a prenuptial contract if a Catholic marries a non-Catholic. The non-Catholic must promise in writing that any children will be raised in the Catholic faith. This insures that there will be no dispute about whose church the children attend once they are born. The Lord never demanded such a contract, but if your prospective mate attends a different church, settle it before you are married.

A young lady I grew up with was baptized into Christ a year or two before she met her husband. He attended a different church, but assured her that he was perfectly willing for her to continue attending the church of Christ. He was true to his word, but when the children were born, the trouble began. Every time she took the children to worship with her, he became abusive. He accused her of ruining his children with “her church of Christ doctrine”. When she carried them to church anyway the abuse became physical. Worse came to worse and the marriage ended. Even though she gained custody of the children none of them possess much faith of

any kind due to the problems it caused for their parents.

Be sure how your children will be reared. It will save you the pain of knowing that your children are not faithful to the Lord, and may save your marriage.

Other Mixed Marriages

Other differences also produce what are often referred to as mixed marriages. Laying all prejudice aside, you will find that even though the Bible prohibited the Jews from making marriages with those of another race or nationality, no such prohibition is placed on Christians. Christians should consider the customs of the area in which they will live both because of their influence and problems any children born to the marriage might face.

Financial Security

Save some

The Bible does not command a savings account, but the principle of providing for lean times is certainly there. God commanded Joseph to tell Pharaoh to store grain during the seven years of plenty in order to provide for the seven lean years. Even the command to lay by in store on the first day of the week is a command to save for future dispersal, "...that there be no gatherings when I come" (1 Corinthians 16:2).

Sometimes I think that Christians believe that the command, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth..." (Matthew 6:19) means never save anything. Jesus is not commanding a lack of foresight but that we not place our "...trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy" (1 Timothy 6:17).

Various sources recommend anywhere from 25 to 100% of your annual income as a savings goal. The exact amount depends on the condition of your car, home, health, and insurance. Such savings will not be developed overnight, but will never be developed unless you begin.

Before you start on the next section of suggestions for financial sufficiency, save a little each payday until you have 500 to 1000 dollars in savings. This is an emergency fund and should not be touched for any other reason. It will not provide for all possibilities, but will take care of one small emergency.

Owe No Man Anything

Today we have rationalized away Paul's command "Owe no man any thing, but to love one another..." (Romans 13:8). The most

The Concept of Giving

When Paul said, “Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him...” (1 Corinthians 16:2), he was not simply designating a day for the early Christians to give. Paul was also indicating that giving was the first thing for which we should provide. In New Testament times people were paid on a daily basis, Paul was indicating that we should give from the first money we receive. Giving should be our first priority. Only then will we truly understand the Lord's words “It is more blessed to give than to receive.” (Acts 20:35).

The joy of giving will pull us out of depression over our own lack, and begin the process of returns we have already indicated.

Chapter 3

The Husband Is The Head

It's not popular, but it is the truth. “Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing.” (Ephesians 5:22-24).

Why Wives Are To Be Subject

“But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence. For Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression. Notwithstanding she shall be saved in childbearing, if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety.” (1 Timothy 2:12-15). It took a long time to sort this one out. Adam was apparently talked into eating the fruit by his wife (Genesis 3:17-19). I do not believe that Paul intended to say that Adam did not sin. Genesis makes it clear that he did. The point of this scripture is that Eve was deceived by Satan and Adam was not. Therefore, she was placed in subjection to the man (Genesis 3:16). It is not intended as a slur against women when I say that most women are less suspicious of other people and more trusting than men. It is this characteristic that allows them to love their children and often their husbands no matter what.

For this reason, the husband is set over the wife as a means of protection (Ephesians 5:25-27; 1 Peter 3:7). Jesus is the head of the church, but he does not set hard and selfish tasks for us to fulfill (Matthew 11:28-30). It is, in fact, his intention to lighten our load. Husbands, if you will make these things your aim, you will never have to worry about a rebellious wife.

Please also take note of the fact that the authority of the man over

the woman in 1 Timothy 2:12-15 hinges on the word *usurp*. This leaves the husband free to delegate whatever authority he deems necessary to his wife. One man confided in me several years ago that his family would have nothing if he controlled the money. "I've never been able to handle money," he said. Therefore, he wisely signed his paycheck and handed it to his wife who paid the bills, bought the groceries, and gave him enough money to make it through the week. As we shall see later, not every woman is suited to this task. An agreement is best made in advance of marriage about who will handle finances or if everything should be by joint agreement only.

The husband is charged with providing for his household (1 Timothy 5:8). Although Paul does not spell out exactly how this is to be done, he does say, "Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth." (Ephesians 4:28). Although it is hard not to, due to years ingrained of social pressure, the husband should not feel like a failure if it becomes necessary for his wife to work. Women have also been breadwinners since before the time of the virtuous woman described in Proverbs 31. God does not condemn this practice but does expect such a woman to carry out her duties as a wife and mother as well. This is not an easy task. Let the husband with a working wife note this difficulty, and be ready to help in any way that he can.

Husbands Love Your Wives

If you have any problem determining what love is, read 1 Corinthians 13. If you are reading from the King James Version of 1611, remember that the words charity and love were used interchangeably at that time.

A wife who is unloved and unappreciated will not remain without spot or blemish long in our society. Though it is not always the case, many a husband blames his wife for her infidelity when if he

Likewise, the Lord instructs us to ask for those things we need (Matthew 7:7-11), and James tells us that if we do not receive it is because we have not asked or have asked for that which is not good (James 4:1-4). If you have a need pray about it (Philippians 4:6-7).

The second source is clearly work. Paul says, "...this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat. For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies. Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread." (2 Thessalonians 3:10-12). Again he tells us, "Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth." (Ephesians 4:28).

The third source is just as clearly indicated in the scriptures, but not easily explained or understood. We experience it only by doing as the scriptures instruct. "Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again." (Luke 6:38). "But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work: (As it is written, He hath dispersed abroad; he hath given to the poor: his righteousness remaineth for ever. Now he that ministereth seed to the sower both minister bread for your food, and multiply your seed sown, and increase the fruits of your righteousness;) Being enriched in every thing to all bountifulness, which causeth through us thanksgiving to God." (2 Corinthians 9:6-11). Due to this concept of multiplication, giving should also become our first expenditure.

Financing the Marriage

For some reason money is a touchy subject. Talk to people about their finances, even your spouse, and you may be quickly informed that it is none of your business! Of all the advice given, we least like to hear or accept financial advice. Very few of us are willing to admit that we don't know how to spend or save our own money. That is why debt and the attendant bankruptcy is at an all time high in our country!

We must learn how to make, save, and spend money the same way we learn everything else. We must be taught. Yet, very few of us are taught anything by our parents about money because they were not taught by their parents. In the few instances when parents offer advice, it is usually to a full grown child who is reluctant to take it. This being the case, how can we learn?

The word of God is able to thoroughly furnish the man of God to all good works (2 Timothy 3:16-17). One of those good works is providing for his family (1 Timothy 5:8).

Making Money

The Bible suggests that money and provision for our physical need comes from three sources.

The first source is seeking and asking. “And seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind. For all these things do the nations of the world seek after: and your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things. But rather seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you.” (Luke 12:29-31) Or as Matthew records, “seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.” (Matthew 6:33).

had been more attentive, it would never have happened. It is difficult to seduce a happy wife. Paul says, “So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church: For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.” (Ephesians 5:28-30). The last verse of this passage is here applied specifically to the Lord and his church. It is also almost a direct quote of Adam's words when presented with the creature made from his rib. “This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.” (Genesis 2:23). Remember above all else that your wife is a part of you and you are a part of her. From the words “I do” you are the most inseparable of Siamese twins. Although each still has an independent will, nothing will be done without considering, and often consulting with the other.

The husband is charged with guiding his family. It is a great and awesome responsibility.

Wife, Reverence Your Husband

God said it, not I (Ephesians 5:33). Reverence is usually reserved for God and for those in authority. This admonition reinforces the authority of a man in his household. It does not mean that the man should use his wife as a doormat. Respect and reverence must be earned, but the wife is to give it whether earned or not. God did not qualify his instructions. (1 Peter 3:1-6).

Disagreements between husband and wife should be kept private and not aired in public. There is nothing that grieves me more than hearing a husband or wife, belittle their mate, talk about how sorry he or she is, or directly contradict them before others. A wife's reverence controls this as does a husband's love.

As a wife you take on certain duties prescribed by God. Older women are to teach these things to younger women. Perhaps a failure in this regard has resulted in failed marriages, just as a failure in men to commit the gospel to faithful men who shall be able to teach others also has resulted in a lack of church growth and a lack of elders in many churches.

Paul said, "The aged women likewise, that they be in behaviour as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things; That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, To be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed." (Titus 2:3-5).

Be Sober

Although you might suppose that this phrase means approximately the same thing as the earlier phrase "not given to much wine," it means much more. Today we would most likely translate the phrase *be serious*, but that still does not fully translate its meaning.

marriage or before.

A happy marriage depends on many things, but none of them is as important as a deep understanding and dedication to God and his word (2 Timothy 2:14-16). Armed with this sword of the spirit, we are furnished to every good work including a lasting marriage (2 Timothy 3:14-17).

By honoring God's plan we humble ourselves before him that he may exalt us in due time (1 Peter 5:6-7). This puts us in a position to turn all our problems over to him. As the scriptures say, "If God be for us, who can be against us." (Romans 8:28-39).

A few years ago someone came up with a slogan, "The family that prays together stays together!" Certainly this is true to some extent. Paul said, "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." (Philippians 4:6-7). Still, we must abide in the Lord first in order to ask (John 15:6-7). The surest way to have a marriage wither is to ignore God.

James reminds us that failure to ask and asking selfishly can result in only trouble (James 4:1-10). Therefore, we ought to always take our problems to God, not to seek our own way, but to request his answers.

This leads us to the subject of family Bible study. "Ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." (Ephesians 6:4). With this verse God places the responsibility for spiritual guidance squarely on the father's shoulders. Though the church is the pillar and ground of the truth (1 Timothy 3:15) and to make known the manifold wisdom of God (Ephesians 3:10), fathers have the responsibility of ruling well their own house (1 Timothy 3:4-5). Family Bible study is a good place to start.

Timothy's father may not have been a Christian, because Paul spoke of "the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also." (2 Timothy 1:5). This would indicate that in the absence of a godly father, the responsibility falls to a Christian mother. How much better things are when both father and mother are united in faith which reaches to the very beginnings of the

We might say that a woman should not be flighty, unable to make up her mind, or empty headed. It seems to be an axiom in the South that men like stupid women. For most men, nothing could be farther from the truth. Paul takes a very dim view of "silly women" and the men who prefer them (Titus 3:1-7). A man needs someone from whom he can get sensible conversation. The man who wants an empty headed wife is lacking in wisdom himself.

Love Their Husband's and Children

Some animals devour their mate after satisfying themselves and eat their young under bad circumstances. Why should we believe that humans male or female would be any different with an untrained conscience. This is why God says teach the younger women to love their husbands and their children. The recent atrocities by mothers against their children and wives against their husband can be traced to a lack of instruction or faulty instruction.

Discreet

Discretion may be the better part of valor, but it is also a big part of a happy marriage. Like many of these qualities, it would be well for the husband to also develop this trait.

The first thing is keeping confidences. Do not repeat what you know would hurt or disturb your mate.

Second, really get to know your mate, be careful what buttons you push. If you know certain words, gestures, or actions upset him, avoid them. Do and say things that make him happy. Husbands should do likewise. Above all, think things through.

Chaste

To put it simply, be a wife of which your husband can be proud.

This applies not only to keeping sexual favors to him alone, but

also to your conversation and actions in other things (1 Peter 3:1-2 NKJV). Chastity also applies to the husband as we shall see in the chapter titled *You Belong To Me*.

Keepers At Home

Some interpret this antique phrase from the KJV to mean a woman should never work outside the home, but more modern translations reveal that it means “homemaker”. This is indeed a formidable task for any woman, and especially so for one who also has a career. Such a combination is not impossible. The virtuous woman of Proverbs 31 was evidently a manufacturer and wholesaler as well as a keeper at home (Proverbs 31:24).

Paul told Timothy, “I will therefore that the younger women marry, bear children, guide the house, give none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully.” (1 Timothy 5:14). This was the normal progression in Paul's day and approved by God. It was not the only approved lifestyle. A woman might remain a virgin if she or her father chose this path (1 Corinthians 7:36-38). This scripture also shows us that childbearing is not the primary reason for marriage as some teach. An older virgin past “the flower of her age”, the childbearing years, was at liberty to marry if she or her father so desired.

Paul converted Lydia in Philippi, though she was from Thyatira. She was probably in town on business, because she was a “seller of purple”, a business that would have made her a very wealthy woman (Acts 16:14-15).

Women, with God's approval, followed many career paths in the Bible, as a careful study will show. Regardless of the path they chose each also accepted the responsibility of keeping the house if they were married. This does not rule out the husband helping with housekeeping duties. “Woman's work” is a figment of the male imagination and not a Biblical principle.

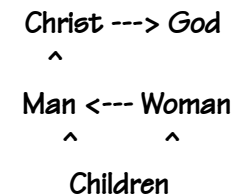
Chapter 6 God At The Center

Many couples have a “church wedding” and this is the last time God is involved in their marriage. I will not tell you that such marriages can not last because some do. I will tell you that such marriages are much more difficult because they have no dependable anchor, no help other than men in trying times.

Couples without God at the center of their marriage tend to give up more easily. When husband and wife both believe in God and accept His view of marriage as a bond that can not be broken, they tend to give more effort to working out difficulties. They see marriage as a life time commitment, and love as something that grows and changes but never fails (1 Corinthians 13:8; NKJV).

“Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” (Hebrews 11:1). Faith, hope, and love provide stability in everything man attempts. If you hope to have a successful marriage faith must be the foundation on which that hope is built. Faith in each other, faith that a lasting marriage is possible, and most important faith in God.

As Paul told the Corinthians, “I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God.” (1 Corinthians 11:3). This, along with several other scriptures (Philippians 2:5-11; Ephesians 5:23-33; 6:1-3), shows the order God intends for the Christian family.



“I instruct married couples to stay together, and this is exactly what the Lord himself taught. A wife who leaves her husband should either stay single or go back to her husband. And a husband should not leave his wife.” (1 Corinthians 7:1-9; CEV).

Husband and wife should both remember that they belong to Christ. “For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.” (1 Corinthians 6:20).

Good

Since Paul has already covered other areas of behavior it is likely that he is here referring to being “full of good works and almsdeeds” as was Tabitha (Acts 9:36). It may also refer to an “honest and good heart” (Luke 8:15).

Obedient To Their Own Husband

Sarah is given as an example (1 Peter 3:1-7). Peter is not suggesting that a woman must call their husband “Lord”. It was a customary way of showing obedience in that time. In New Testament times a woman wore a veil or long hair, but Paul makes clear that this was only a custom (1 Corinthians 11:3-16). Today, a woman most likely shows obedience by consulting her husband on all matters of importance.

All of these things have one purpose, “that the word of God be not blasphemed.” Their purpose is not to make woman a slave to man, but to present an orderly life that glorifies God.

You Belong To Me

The title of this chapter was also the title of a very popular song in the early '60s. The singer urged her boyfriend to see the world but to always remember, “You belong to me.” While this is not exactly true of a boyfriend or girlfriend, it is certainly true in marriage.

In Bible times the woman was looked on as property. The father was the owner of an unmarried woman and that ownership passed to the husband at marriage. Paul's description of God's intention for husband and wife was revolutionary.

In Paul's description of marriage (1 Corinthians 7:1-40), the wife is still the property of the husband, but the revolutionary part of the arrangement is that the husband is also the property of the wife. In the words of the New International Version, “The wife's body does not belong to her alone but also to her husband. In the same way, the husband's body does not belong to him alone but also to his wife.” (1 Corinthians 7:4).

The idea of the husband living by the same rule as the wife was not entirely new. It had always been implied in the two becoming one flesh (Genesis 2:18-25), but man applied this in a one sided way. Since woman had been taken out of man, and God had said her desire would be to her husband, man took this to imply that he owned the woman while no one owned him. Only in the latter part of the 20th Century have husbands been held to the same rules as the wife. This is particularly true in regard to morality. A wife who was unfaithful to her marriage vows was a “scarlet woman”. A husband who did the same thing was only “acting naturally” in the eyes of many. God never had a double standard.

Hosea was probably the first to state matters as God intended when he told Gomer, “Thou shalt abide for me many days; thou shalt not

play the harlot, and thou shalt not be for another man: so will I also be for thee.” (Hosea 3:3).

The wise man said, “Let thy fountain be blessed: and rejoice with the wife of thy youth. Let her be as the loving hind and pleasant roe; let her breasts satisfy thee at all times; and be thou ravished always with her love. And why wilt thou, my son, be ravished with a strange woman, and embrace the bosom of a stranger? For the ways of man are before the eyes of the LORD, and he pondereth all his goings.” (Proverbs 5:18-21).

That a woman would “play the harlot” being unfaithful to her husband was almost unthinkable in Bible times. Modern “liberation” has given woman the same lusts and vices that were always possessed by men. She has not been liberated, but enslaved by the same sins that man has always found to his liking (Romans 6:16).

Lust of the flesh is the reason that Paul admonished both husband and wife not to refuse sex with each other. The Contemporary English Version reads, “Now I will answer the questions that you asked in your letter. You asked, 'Is it best for people not to marry?' Well, having your own husband or wife should keep you from doing something immoral. Husbands and wives should be fair with each other about having sex. A wife belongs to her husband instead of herself, and a husband belongs to his wife instead of himself. So don't refuse sex to each other, unless you agree not to have sex for a little while, in order to spend time in prayer. Then Satan won't be able to tempt you because of your lack of self control. In my opinion, that is what should be done, though I don't know of anything the Lord said about this matter. I wish that all of you were like me, but God has given different gifts to each of us.

“Here is my advice for people who have never been married and for widows. You should stay single, just as I am. But if you don't have enough self-control, then go ahead and get married. After all, it is better to marry than to burn with desire.