

# **MINEOLA BIBLE INSTITUTE AND SEMINARY**

Page | 1

## **Christian Marriage**

**Radically Biblical, Apostolic, Christianity**



Larry L Yates, ThD, DMin

**“Excellence in Apostolic Education since 1991”**

Copyright © 2019

**Mineola Bible Institute and Seminary**

All Rights Reserved

This lesson material may not be used in any manner for reproduction in any language or use without the written permission of Mineola Bible Institute and Seminary

# CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE

## Marriage Preparation & Improvement

How important should religion, faith, worship, and Bible study be in marriage and in choice of a spouse? What authorities or experts should husbands and wives follow? Why should a Christian marry a faithful Christian?

### I. The Role of Religion

Religion is important in the home in all of the following areas:

#### A. The Authority or Source of Guidance Your Home Follows.

Many people are confused about the proper way to conduct their home life. What authority should your home follow?

*People often follow human “authorities” to the harm of the home.*

**Worldly marriage “experts”** - psychiatrists, feminists, sex educators, civil government, etc. (I Corinthians 1:19-21; 2:4,5; Proverbs 14:12).

**Practices of society** - advice or example of friends, neighbors, etc. (Romans 12:1,2; II Corinthians 10:12; Matthew 7:13,14).

**Practices of our parents** - people tend to act in their families the way people around them acted as they grew up. (Matthew 10:34-37; Acts 5:29).

Personal desires or desires of the family members (Matthew 16:24,25; 10:34-37).

We need not ignore all advice these folks give; they are not always mistaken. But they are often wrong, and many of the problems in our homes come from following these authorities.

We need a better standard - a source of higher wisdom. Suppose we had an infallible source of guidance.

Shouldn't we follow such a standard, instead of these fallible human standards? If these human guides disagree with our infallible source, shouldn't we reject the human standards and follow the infallible one?

*The ultimate source of guidance in your home should be the Bible.*

Genesis 2:18-24 - God created marriage and the home from the very beginning. Since He created marriage, He knows the best way to conduct it.

I Thessalonians 2:13 - The Bible is a revelation of the wisdom, not of men, but of God's. It works effectively in those who believe.

II Timothy 3:16,17 - Scriptures are profitable to teach and instruct us and provide us completely to all good works. Doesn't that include the good work of having a good marriage?

Isaiah 55:8,9 - But God's wisdom is superior to that of man, like the heavens are higher than the earth. This is true in every area.

Joshua 1:8 - We have access in our work when we study God's plan and do not depart from it. Many claim to believe this regarding salvation, the church, worship, etc. But do

we likewise follow God's plan for our homes?

Psalms 127:1 - Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it.

We do not need to have so much confusion and uncertainty about family affairs. The Bible is the Word of God, and God is never wrong. If you want a good marriage and a good home, you must follow the proper guide. (II Peter 1:3; Acts 17:11).

### B. The Main Goal for Our Homes.

*Too many families put too much emphasis on materialistic goals.*

**Material possessions** - Luke 12:15-21; I Timothy 6:9,10; I John 2:15-17.

**Pleasure** - II Timothy 3:1-5; Hebrews 11:24-26.

**Popularity and social standing** - John 12:42,43.

**Beauty** - Proverbs 31:30; I Peter 3:3,4.

**Recreation, athletics** - I Timothy 4:8.

*The most important goal our homes should seek to accomplish is to serve God and help one another receive eternal life.*

Genesis 18:19 - Abraham commanded his house to keep God's ways.

Joshua 24:15 - Joshua committed himself and his family to serve God.

Malachi 2:15 - God seeks homes that result in godly offspring.

There are other important goals for our homes, such as love and companionship and raising our children to be good citizens. But even if a family has all these, it is still a failure if it does not accomplish the most important goal. Too often families become so involved in pursuing other less important goals that they neglect responsibilities to God.

In order to have proper home lives, service to God must be our main focal point. Do not marry someone who does not view serving God as their main goal in life. (Matthew 6:33; Romans 12:1,2; I Corinthians 15:58).

### C. The Importance of Worshipping God and Studying His Word in our Homes.

*Our families should worship God together.*

Genesis 2:18-24 - Man and woman should be companions for one another. If serving God is our most important goal in life, then worship is one important area which we should share.

Joshua 24:15 - Joshua determined that he and his house would serve the Lord. This is something the whole family together was committed to doing.

John 4:23,24; Hebrews 10:24,25 - God wants His people to worship Him, including attending church assemblies. If we are able to help one another serve Him, then we will do this together.

Young couples, from the very beginning of their relationship, should determine to attend every meeting of the local church and take advantage of other opportunities to worship. If someone is not interested in worshipping God with you, what are the chances that you can work with that person to help one another serve God?

If you want a good marriage and a good home, you must worship God regularly together.

*To be guided by God's Word, a family must study it together.*

Hebrews 3:13 - Christians should exhort one another daily to stay faithful. But helping one another serve God is the main goal of our homes. We cannot possibly accomplish the most important purpose for our marriage unless we daily study and discuss God's Word.

Genesis 18:19 - Abraham commanded his family to keep God's way.

Deuteronomy 6:6-9 - We should keep God's words in our hearts, teaching them diligently to our children, talking of them continually.

Ephesians 6:4 - Fathers train up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

Young couples should begin this practice from the beginning of their relationship. Suggest spiritual topics and study them together. This helps you understand one another's beliefs, develops your Bible knowledge, and establishes a spiritual foundation for your relationship. If

someone is not comfortable or not interested in studying the Bible with you, what are the chances he/she will work with you to achieve the ultimate goal of serving God and going to heaven?

If you want a good marriage and a good home, you must learn to discuss God's Word. (I Thessalonians 5:11; Acts 8:4; 10:24,27,33).

*In particular, families need to pray together and pray for one another.*

James 5:16 - Praying together is one of the most important things Christians can do to help one another be saved. But remember, helping one another be saved is the main goal of a marriage.

James 1:5 - Those who need wisdom should pray for it. This wisdom will come as we study God's Word. But don't we need wisdom to have good marriages? Are there things about your marriage that you wish you had the wisdom to improve? Do you want to know whether or not it would be wise to marry some particular young man/woman? If so, then we must diligently pray that we will have the wisdom from God's Word in our homes. (Hebrews 5:14).

Philippians 4:6 - Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God. Don't we often have concerns for our marriage and our family? Do we become anxious or worried about what might happen? Don't we have needs we wish to see fulfilled in our homes? Then let us pray to God about these things.

Genesis 24:12 - Abraham had given a charge to his servant to find a wife for Isaac. The servant went to God in prayer for success. Do you want to be successful in finding a marriage companion or that your children will find a proper marriage companion? If this servant prayed about such a matter, how much more so, the parents or the person who seeks a companion.

Again, I urge young couples to begin this practice from the very early days of your relationship. If someone is not comfortable praying with you or does not think prayer is important, will he/she make a good marriage companion?

Every Christian who wants a good marriage should never let a day go by that you don't pray to God for your spouse, your children, and yourself, that all of you will serve God faithfully in your home. If you want a good marriage and a good home, you must pray to

God regularly.  
(I Chronicles 29:19).

#### D. The Importance of Common Faith in the Home.

Genesis 2:18 - One of the most important purposes of marriage is companionship: sharing common goals and interests. Failure to share a common religious faith is one of the major grounds for conflict in marriage.

A Christian should marry a faithful Christian for all the following reasons:

*A faithful Christian will help, not hinder, your worship to God.*

John 4:23,24; Hebrews 10:24,25 - We already learned that families should worship God together, especially attending public worship assemblies. When both companions are Christians, they commune together in song, prayer, the Lord's Supper, etc. They will agree about the need to give generously to support the church.

But if you do not marry a Christian, your spouse may not attend with you. Worse yet, he or she may attend a false religious worship. Your spouse may actively oppose your attendance with

the Lord's church. Your spouse may resent and oppose giving money to the church.

Proverbs 15:8,29 - Even if your companion does not actively oppose your worship, you still lack the unity and support you need. God will not accept their worship as long as they remain outside Christ. (I Corinthians 10:16,17).

*A faithful Christian will pray with you, not hinder your prayers.*

We have learned that Christians should pray to God together and pray for one another

(James 5:16; I Thessalonians 5:17).

I John 3:22 - But if your companion is not a Christian, God will not hear or answer their prayers (Proverbs 28:9; James 5:16). Your spouse may even ridicule you for your prayers. If a young lady marries a young man who is not a Christian, who will lead family prayers before meals and other times when Christians would pray together?

*A faithful Christian will help, not hinder, your Bible study.*

We have also learned that Christian couples should discuss and study Bible principles together and encourage one another with God's Word (Hebrews 3:13; I Thessalonians 5:11).

But a companion who is not a Christian may not be willing to study. If you initiate a spiritual discussion, the result may be argument and conflict. In all these aspects of worship, instead of being a source of strength, your companion will become a hindrance and discouragement.

*A faithful Christian will help, not hinder, your efforts to teach God's Word.*

Acts 8:4 - Like Aquila and Priscilla, Christian couples work together in this, inviting friends over to discuss religion and study the Bible. They can talk together and share ideas to improve their teaching.

But if your companion is not a Christian, he/she may oppose your efforts to teach. Your spouse may object if you invite others to your home to study, and may resent the time you spend in teaching. Your spouse may openly contradict the truth, and will surely hinder your teaching by their example.

*A faithful Christian will obey and help you obey the Bible teachings about marriage.*

We have learned that truly good marriages must be based on Bible principles. Most marital unhappiness comes because people do not follow the Bible principles about marriage.

We will learn more of these principles as we proceed: Husbands should love and provide for their wives, wives should submit to their husbands and be homemakers, etc.

If you marry a Christian, you have a right to expect him or her to obey the Bible. But you would have no reason from the very outset to expect a non-Christian to obey God's Word. If he or she does not obey God's plan for marriage, how will you motivate your spouse to do right?

*A faithful Christian will encourage, not discourage, proper morality.*

II Timothy 3:16,17; Psalms 119:105 - Christian couples have a common standard by which to determine their moral beliefs and practices.

But if you marry one who is not a Christian, he/she may have (or may develop) habits you object to: drinking liquor, smoking, profanity, dirty jokes, gambling, dirty T.V. shows, suggestive clothing, even pornography or drug abuse.

What if he/she spends family funds on things you consider to be immoral? What is he/she is dishonest in business dealings or refuses to pay family debts? What if he/she wants to donate funds to causes that you oppose?

How can you appeal to your spouse, if you knew all along that they were not living by the Bible?

*A faithful Christian will help, not hinder, your relations with friends and in-laws.*

I Corinthians 15:33 - Evil companions corrupt our morals. When you marry, you inherit

your companion's family and friends. If you marry a faithful Christian, he/she will want to associate with Christians and good moral people.

But if you marry one who is not a Christian, their closest friends will not be Christians. And what about in-laws? Will your in-laws oppose your religious beliefs? How well will you get along with them, and how well will your spouse get along with your family and friends?

You need to consider these questions seriously before marriage.  
(Proverbs 13:20; 29:27)

*A Christian will work with you, not against you, in raising your children.*

Nearly all the concerns we have already discussed become magnified when the children come along. Each spouse wants the children raised in agreement with his or her own views.

Ephesians 6:4; Genesis 18:19; Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Proverbs 22:6 - Christians will agree to train the children "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." They will work together in regular Bible study and bringing the children to all the assemblies of the church (Hebrews 10:25).

But if you do not marry a Christian, your companion may discourage your children from studying the Bible, attending services, or becoming Christians. He or she may even insist that the children go with them to attend a false church or allow them to attend recreational or social events instead of church meetings.

Proverbs 13:24 - Parents who are Christians have a standard for agreeing what moral principles they will teach their children. They will agree to chastise the children, firmly and consistently yet lovingly, to motivate them to obey (Hebrews 12:5-11).

But if your companion is not a Christian, what will you do if he/she allows the children to drink, smoke, dress immodestly, use profanity, attend dances, go to wild parties, run with a bad crowd, or even share a bedroom with a friend of the opposite sex? What will you do if he/she refuses to punish the children when they need it, or if he/she opposes your efforts to discipline the children?

Nehemiah 13:23,24 - When Israelites married people of other nations and religions, their children were influenced by heathen parents. So, your children will be influenced by your non-Christian spouse.

Raising children is difficult enough today, even when the parents work together. How will you feel if one of your children is eternally lost because you chose to marry a non-Christian?

*A Christian will help, not hinder, your efforts to achieve your most important goal; serving God and receiving eternal life.*

Matthew 6:33 - We already learned that helping one another serve God should be the most important goal of our marriage. If you marry a Christian, he/she will share with you this major goal. But if you marry someone who is not a Christian, then he/she will not share with you the most important areas of your life.

Revelation 20:14,15 - Anyone not found in the Book of Life will be sent into the lake of fire, the second death. Your spouse should be the dearest loved one on earth to you. If he/she is not a Christian, then you face the great likelihood that your dearest loved one will be eternally lost! Will you be able to live with that fact without compromising the truth to please them?

Nehemiah 13:26,27 - The Old Testament forbade marriage to people of other nations, because it would lead God's people into sin. Solomon was an example of one to whom

this happened (Deuteronomy 7:3-4). We do not live under the Old Testament, but the danger still exists today.

You need to think and pray seriously before you enter into a mixed marriage relationship. Think of how this relationship will affect your children, at school, and in the important areas of their lives.

You and your potential spouse need to seriously discuss all such concerns **early in your relationship**. If your companion promises he/she will change, give them plenty of time to prove they are willing to change **before making any commitment about marriage**. And give it long enough you are convinced the change for keeps.

If your marriage is to be happy and successful, you will need to go through life working with another faithful Christian. (Matthew 16:24-27; Romans 12:1,2; John 6:27, 63; Luke 12:15-21; 14:26; Matthew 10:34-37).

=====

What are proper reasons why one should choose to marry? How important are love, companionship, sexual affection, and raising children? What are improper reasons why some people marry?

**II. The Purpose of Marriage**

If we understand the proper purposes for marriage, we are far more likely to accomplish those goals and to choose a mate with whom we can accomplish them. If we do not understand those goals, we are almost sure to fail to achieve what marriage is all about.

A. The Main Goal of Marriage Is To Help One Another Serve God.

We have already discussed this under "Religion." However, there are also other

legitimate reasons for marrying.

### B. Marriage Is For Companionship And Love.

Genesis 2:18-22 - Woman was created because it was not good for man to be alone and because animals were not suitable companions for him. So, God created woman to be a companion and helper to man (Proverbs 18:22; 19:14).

Malachi 2:14 - The wife is a **companion** with whom the man has entered into the marriage covenant (Proverbs 2:17).

Ephesians 5:25-29; Titus 2:4 - Husband and wife are both instructed to **love** one another.

When man and wife are proper companions, loving one another as the Bible teaches, they fulfill one of the strongest desires and greatest needs people have. No one should ever marry until they are ready to love and care for their spouse, at least as great as they care, for themselves. However, this requires understanding of what love really is. We will explain this later in more detail.

### C. Marriage Is To Bear And Raise Children.

Genesis 1:27,28 - God told the first man and woman to reproduce and replenish the earth. God created the sexual desire of men and women for each other. God did not create two men nor did He create two women. He created man and woman, male and female. Anything other than the original plan of God is an abomination to Him.

Psalms 127:3-5; 128:1-6 - Children should be appreciated as a gift from God.

Malachi 2:15 - God makes man and woman one, because He seeks Godly offspring.

Ephesians 6:4 - Parents have a duty, in the family, to raise and train the children they bring into the world (Genesis 3:16).

No institution or arrangement, other than the family, can produce the same benefits for children. This is one reason why it is immoral to bear children out of wedlock or to refuse to care for them after we have given them birth. If children can be raised acceptably by child-care arrangements or government facilities, why did God insist that they be raised in a family? Children raised in a Godly family is greater than any school or government facility.

One of life's greatest fulfillments is the sense of accomplishment that comes from knowing you have brought into this world and brought up children who honor God and are a blessing to people around them. Young couples should not marry unless they are both willing to make the sacrifices and put forth the effort to do the very best they can to achieve this goal.

#### D. Marriage Is To Express Sexual Affection.

Hebrews 13:4 - The sexual union is holy and pure, only within marriage.

Proverbs 5:15-20 - Man should find fulfillment for his desires only in his lawful wife.

I Corinthians 7:2-5,8,9 - Husband and wife should express sexual affection, not tempting their companion by "defrauding" them. Couples should make themselves available to each other, except in the case of fasting and prayer or mutual agreement in case of sickness (I Corinthians 7:5). Satisfying the sexual desire is one legitimate reason for getting married. The Bible states that marriage is honorable in all and the **bed undefiled**, but whoremongers and adulterers will God judge (Hebrews 13:4).

Note that the sexual union is **not** just for procreation. It is a basic urge created by God. It is pure and holy, but it can properly be fulfilled only within the God-ordained institution

of marriage. Hence, it becomes a natural expression of the love and companionship of marriage.

Most people marry for a combination of the above reasons. When we understand the proper reasons for marriage, we also understand why it is a mistake for people to marry for other reasons, such as:

- \* To attain wealth, influence, popularity, or social status.
- \* To escape serious problems in their previous home life.
- \* Because all one’s friends are getting married.
- \* Just so you can feel like somebody wanted you - some people have felt unloved and rejected or inferior all their lives, so they just want to feel like somebody wants them.
- \* Because we are “on the rebound” from a broken relationship.
- \* Because we want someone to provide for us or to keep house for us, etc.
- \* Because our family or friends think we make a good couple.

When people enter marriage for these improper reasons, they usually find their marriage dissatisfies them, their companions, and especially God.

=====

What does the Bible teach about the permanence of marriage? When may one divorce, and remarry? How important is a lifetime commitment, “till death do us part.”

### III. The Permanence of Marriage

Divorce is a terrible tragedy leaving husbands, wives, and especially children emotionally scarred for life. Often there are also severe financial consequences, especially for the wife and children. Above all, divorce always involves someone in disobedience to God.

#### A. Bible Teaching.

Genesis 2:24 - From the beginning, God intended marriage to involve one man and one woman who **cleave** (be joined - NKJV) to one another and become one. God never intended for the union to be put asunder so another mate can be taken.

Malachi 2:14,16 - God hates divorce.

Romans 7:2,3 - Marriage is for life. A person who is bound in marriage to a spouse cannot have another companion as long as their first companion lives.

Matthew 19:3-9 (5:31,32) - What God has joined together, man must not put asunder. The only exception God allows, in which one may divorce a companion, is for the cause of fornication. If one divorces for any other reason, the divorce is a sin. And when he/she remarries he/she commits adultery. And whoever marries the one whom he/she puts away commits adultery. I would also conclude that if two persons are married in Christ, and one leaves the marriage, files for divorce, and then remarries again, that leaves the other person an innocent party. According to Scripture the innocent party may remarry only in the Lord.

I handled a case once where two couples were married in the Lord for 6 months, yet, due to a major medical reason they could not consummate the marriage by coming together in a sexual union. One mate had this medical malfunction prior to marriage. The person with the medical malfunction eventually left the marriage by filing for an

annulment. An annulment restored both parties back to the original single status because the marriage was not sexually consummated. The innocent party who happened to be a minister of the gospel, was very saddened by the other party filing for the annulment. Later on in life he remarried in the Lord, and was disbarred from his religious organization. I find this to be appalling. Many persons have been shunned because some do not understand the Scriptures and proper judgment in these matters.

### B. Applications.

Never enter a Scripturally doubtful marriage.

I Corinthians 7:10,11 - The only Scriptural alternatives for one who has improperly divorced are to remain unmarried or be reconciled to their Scriptural spouse.

A divorced person should never marry unless they are certain that they divorced their spouse because that spouse committed fornication. Before you marry, search your soul and the facts of your case. Make sure your spouse was guilty of fornication and that was the reason why you divorced them.

Never marry a divorced person unless you are certain they divorced their companion for Scriptural grounds. Have long talks and careful studies about the Bible teaching early in your relationship, before you develop strong emotions. Don't just take their word for it. Many divorced people deceive themselves or others in order to remarry. Talk to others who know the facts, especially your Pastor. Take the safe course and don't run the risks with your soul. You may decide the risk is just not worth it.

When a divorced person remarries, his/her soul hangs in the balance, and so does the soul of the person they marry. If you really love someone, you will not endanger their soul or yours.

*Enter marriage with a mutual determination to stay together for life.*

Too many people enter marriage like they are buying a car: “I’ll try this one, and if I get a lemon “I’ll just trade her in.” Some even live together without marriage and call it a “trial marriage.” They lack commitment. So, when problems arise, as they do in all relationships, instead of making a determined effort to work the problems out, they just end the marriage.

A “trial marriage” is not a marriage at all. It is two people living openly in fornication. A trial marriage does not involve a lifetime commitment. You can walk out anytime. That tells you something about marriage, because marriage involves commitment. That’s why people, who do marry after living together, are more likely to divorce than those who do not live together. They think they have learned how to work together in marriage, but they haven’t. They don’t understand commitment.

Couples who enter marriage with a true commitment, will still face problems. But they will work together to solve the problems, because they have no choice. Divorce is not an option. They must live together, so they need to work things out.

Furthermore, people who lack this commitment will not find their relationship ultimately satisfying. The beauty of marriage lies in knowing that you and one person value one another above all other people on earth, to the point that you are willing to commit yourselves to one another for life, no matter what the future holds. Only when you have a commitment will you find that, throughout life and even into old age, your marriage is truly satisfying.

The commitment of marriage is: “for better or for worse, for richer or for poorer, in sickness and in health, **till death do us part.**” That is not just a tradition. It is not just a piece of paper. It is Bible principle ordained by Almighty God. Anything else fails to honor God or your spouse.

Young couples who are considering marriage need to have long, serious talks and Bible studies about the commitment of marriage. And they should never marry unless they are certain that they are both committed to stay married and be true to one another for life.

=====

Why should a couple both be mature before marrying? How important is it to know one another well? Should we choose a companion on the basis of character or feelings and emotions?

#### **IV. Maturity and Knowing One Another**

Proverbs 5:1,2 - In advising his son about relationships with women, Solomon said to pay attention to wisdom and preserve discretion.

In some ways, whom you choose to marry is a matter of right or wrong (as when they are unscriptural divorced). Spiritual wisdom comes from God, but in many ways, the decision requires considerable judgment - not necessarily absolute rights or wrongs. I may not be able to prove everything I say here is Scriptural requirement, but I believe it to be good wisdom.

##### A. Choose a Companion Based on Character, not Emotions.

*The Bible contains relatively few examples of choosing of marriage companions.*

Genesis 24 - Abraham's servant found a wife for Isaac. The couple never met until their wedding. And the specific choice was arranged by God (vv 50,51), which cannot be done today. But Abraham insisted that the bride come from his family so he knew her background, not from the wicked people of the land. And the decision was made by a man of wise judgment who entreated the blessing of God.

Genesis 29 - Jacob also went back to his mother's family to find a companion, because the young people where he lived were ungodly. He made his own decision that he wanted to marry Rachel after he had lived with her family for a month (v14). And the agreement was that he would still not marry her till seven years later.

Ruth 2 - Ruth gleaned in the fields of Boaz throughout the length of the barley harvest and the wheat harvest. At the end of this period they determined to marry. However, this too involved some differences from today. Ruth was a widow whose husband had died without descendants. Boaz was a near kinsman of Ruth, and the law required him to take her as his wife to raise up seed to her husband. But, he knew her well by reputation. Her past life and conduct had been fully reported to him (2:11). She was known throughout the town as a virtuous woman (3:11).

*But the Bible describes at length the character of godly wives and husbands.*

The above examples involve some variation. But the one thing clear in every case is that what mattered most was the character of the one to be chosen. Many Scriptures tell the kind of person a man or woman must be in order to have a godly marriage.

Proverbs 31:10-31 - A virtuous woman is hard to find. Her character is described here and elsewhere. This is the kind of woman a young man should seek to find.

Likewise, the Bible describes the qualities of a godly husband. We will study these at length.

I know of no passage that states how you should **feel** toward a person before you marry them.

You should love your spouse, but we will see that Bible love is more choice and commitment than emotion. Feelings are important in marriage; but if you marry a person of godly character, you can learn to love him/her. But a person of ungodly

character will be a source of constant trouble to a Christian.

We will study the qualities of husbands and wives as we proceed. Before you marry you need to **know** - not just assume or even suspect - that your future spouse possesses these qualities. If not, either look elsewhere or give him/her time to change and prove they will be godly.

### *Applications*

The entertainment industry bombards us with the romantic line to “just let your heart decide.” Couples who have seriously different backgrounds meet, “fall in love,” get married, and live happy ever after. Girls meet guys with immoral backgrounds and decide to marry them. This puts stars in the eyes of romantic, idealistic young women. But it is foolish and incredibly dangerous.

Proverbs 28:26 - He who trusts in his own heart is a fool. **Do not choose a spouse on the basis of feelings or instincts.**

A popular song, years ago talked about a couple who met and married in the heat of passion, but they’ve been talking about divorce “ever since the fire went out.”

Feelings come and go. You have highs and lows. People feel excited and high today, but tomorrow feel down and blue. This is normal for all people, even those who have good marriages. If you marry because a person excites you, you may regret the decision when the fire goes out.

Character should remain constant. Feelings come and go. Base your choice on character and you can sustain the relationship. Know one another well over a number of periods of emotional ups and downs, to see if your commitment can survive the downs as well as the ups.

### B. Know One Another Very Well Before Committing to Marriage.

In order to choose a companion based on character, it follows that you must know a person's character and know it well in order to judge wisely.

Ecclesiastes 5:2 - Do not be rash with your mouth, and let not your heart utter anything hastily before God. Marriage is a commitment before God. Do not enter it rashly.

Consider some specific applications.

*Generally, you should know one another a long time.*

Some families teach their children to know a person for at least two years before they marry them - longer, if there was any significant questions about the person's character or spirituality. But the issue is not how long you know one another so much as how **well** you know one another. In some circumstances people get to know one another more quickly than otherwise.

Someone says, "I know couples who got married a month after they met, and they had a good marriage." Yes, I have heard of people who jumped out of airplanes without a good parachute and survived, but I still don't recommend it! And people who get married after a short courtship will not recommend it to their children.! They ran a risk, but were fortunate. For every such person, there are many who marry after a short courtship and live to regret it.

A Pastor's daughter met a young man at college, and a few months later they asked for his blessing on their wedding plans. The pastor did not know the young man and his first impression was unfavorable. So, he stalled...and stalled...and stalled to get to know him better. After enough time passed, the young man revealed his true character, and the pastor's daughter broke off the relationship.

Proverbs 29:20 - Do you see a man hasty in his words? There is more hope for a fool

than for him. Hasty commitment to marriage is absolutely foolish.

If you do not know a person well - well enough to put your life and even your eternal destiny on the outcome - then you are not ready to get married.

*Talk about issues of importance in marriage.*

Ask the other person their views about marriage, children, and especially about spiritual matters. Express your views and get their reaction. Study the Bible together. Learn your areas of agreement and disagreement.

And learn to work out your differences. Do not ignore your disagreements. Many people think their problems will just work out after marriage. How do you know? Usually they get worse! Discuss them now and see how well you are able to work out problems. Every marriage has problems. If you can't work out problems, you cannot succeed in marriage.

If you and your friend have not thoroughly discussed what you expect from marriage - and if you have not demonstrated your ability to resolve differences - you are not ready to marry.

*Spend time together under many different circumstances.*

Proverbs 23:7 - For as he thinks in his heart, so is he.

"Talk is cheap." Don't base your decision just on talk. Get to know a person's heart.

The young man that the Pastor's daughter almost married said all the right things, but somehow his actions never seemed to accomplish his big plans.

Typical dating situations hide flaws. Couples put on their best behavior and best

appearance to attract the other person. Friends and family may not tell you what they know about the person's shortcomings. **After** marriage is when all the character flaws become obvious - but it's too late. You need to know his or her character before marriage.

Couples should spend time together in various situations. Spend time with your family and friends. See how he/she treats their family and friends and how well he/she gets along with your family and friends. Go places where they like to go and places where you like to go. Observe how they react under circumstances of stress, when they are not getting their way. Observe one another in the real world.

*Consider a person's reputation and the judgment of godly family and friends.*

Proverbs 15:22 - Without council, plans go awry, but in the multitude of counselors they are established.

Boaz knew Ruth was a godly woman, because she had that reputation throughout the whole city. Sometimes a person's reputation - good or bad - is not deserved. But before you marry someone whose reputation is not good, make sure you know why they have that reputation.

Get to know well the family and friends of your potential spouse. Seek the honest evaluation of people who know the other person well and whose godly wisdom you trust.

The young man that the Pastor's daughter was about to marry was planning to preach. A preacher who knew them both well, wrote a "letter of recommendation" to churches about him. About the only really good thing the letter said about the young man was that he wanted to marry a really outstanding young woman! The red flag was waiving!

The opinions of others should not be final, but consider them carefully.

### C. Both of You Should Be Old Enough to Make Mature Judgments.

I Corinthians 14:20 \_ Do not be children in understanding; in malice be babes, but in understanding be mature.

Page | 27

Proverbs 7:7 - Describing a young man who lacked wisdom in his choice of women, Solomon said, "I perceived among the youths, a young man devoid of understanding."

Not all youths are foolish, but youths generally lack mature judgment needed to make a wise marriage choice. Wisdom and good judgment come with age.

*A choice of a marriage companion requires mature judgment.*

Choosing a marriage companion is too serious to be made by immature people. The problem is that teenagers often tend to think they are much more mature than they are!

The divorce rate for people who marry in their teens is much higher than for people who marry in their twenties. Even people who marry in their early twenties are twice as likely to divorce as those who marry at 25-25 (*Focus on the Family*, 11/1992, p.2).

Again, someone says, "I know people who got married in their late or even middle teens and had a good marriage." Yes, but they will advise their children not to do it! And in most cases, these were people who married years ago in a different age and different society when divorce was not easy like today. Often, they worked things out, because breaking up marriage was frowned on by society and their family.

Marriage is one of the most important decisions you will ever make. If you follow the Bible, you will live the rest of your life with a person you choose. It is a choice you cannot change. It requires a mature decision. And maturity requires experience. And experience takes time.

*Young people need experience with life and people before they make a choice.*

Often young people are not settled regarding what they want in a spouse.

Observe older couples who have had good marriages that have stood the test of time, and see what kind of person you want to marry. Consider people whose marriages have failed and learn what kind of person you don't want to marry.

Get to know different kinds of young people, so you will know what you are looking for. Visit with others, not just in dating situations, but in groups, get-togethers, and family situations.

Our society encourages exclusiveness and intimacy early in relationships. Even young teenagers "go steady" - restrict dating to just one person. I urge parents and young people to resist that approach. Some parents tell their kids they could not date at all until they were 16, and then only in groups or double-dating. They could not single date until they were 18 and then only if the parents approved of that person.

Usually (though not always), people will have several relationships in various degrees of seriousness before they find one with whom to have a good marriage. I sometimes say I have never known anyone who found a good mate without first having their heart broken at least once.

You need to experience life's problems as well as its joys. If your parents are true Christians, chances are they have sheltered you from some of life's problems. That is a good thing. But it means you will need to be older before you are ready to make serious decisions like marriage.

Proverbs 20:25 - It is a snare for a man to devote rashly something as holy, and afterward to reconsider his vows. I can think of no area where this applies more than in

marriage. Marriage is based on sacred vows. Entering those vows rashly and hastily generally leads to a snare. But after you are married, it is too late to reconsider your vows.

“Marry in haste, and repent in leisure.” Studies confirm the wisdom of this. You will live with this person all the rest of your life, so why rush into it? Don’t jump into exclusive relationships. And above all, don’t jump into marriage. Take your time and make wise decisions. If in doubt, **wait!** What do you have to lose by waiting, even another year or two? By taking your time to make sure of your choice, you have everything to gain and very little to lose.

=====

How important are love and affection in marriage? What is love and how is it expressed? How can a couple put love into their marriage? Why practice giving and self-sacrifice, instead of selfishness?

### **V. Loving One Another**

Ephesians 5:28,29 - Husbands should love their wives as Christ loved the church.

Titus 2:4 - Wives should love their husbands.

#### A. Love is Concern for the Well-being of Others.

##### *Bible Principles.*

Ephesians 5:25,28,29 - Jesus’ love for the church illustrates the love husbands should have for their wives. He loved us so much He gave His life so we could be saved. So, the husband should be concerned for the wellbeing of the wife. He should nourish and cherish her as he does his own body. He must use his authority, not to please himself,

but to do what is best for her and the family.

I Corinthians 13:5 - Love is not selfish. (Romans 13:10)

Philippians 2:1-4 - Love requires us to not act from selfish ambition or conceit. We look out, not just for our own interests, but for the interests of those we love.

To have a good marriage, both spouses must seek the well-being of the other person. When one or both companions selfishly insist on their own way, problems are inevitable in the family.

### *Applications*

Instead of love, couples often express self-will and lack of concern for their spouse.

### **Sometimes selfishness and lack of love shows in major ways.**

The husband is lazy and won't work to provide for the family.

The wife is lazy and won't care for the house or the children.

The husband spends money on toys he wants, but the wife and children lack for food or clothes.

The wife prefers to socialize with her friends, leaving the house in a mess.

### **Sometimes lack of love shows in less obvious ways.**

The husband treats his wife like a slave, but he won't lift a finger to get something for her. He sits in front of the TV saying, "I need a sandwich. Get me a coke. How about some pretzels." But he would be furious if she made similar demands on him.

Or the wife has a list of work for the husband to do around the house, but gets mad when he watches TV. But while he goes to work, she watches TV, reads for pleasure, or visits with her friends for hours at a time, neglecting her work.

Love is a matter of degree and a matter of growth. But always, love seeks the well-being and pleasure of the other person, instead of just pleasing oneself.

### B. Love is a Choice of the Will.

#### *Bible Principles*

Ephesians 5:25,28 - Love can be commanded, because it is a matter of the **will**. We can choose whether or not to love, just like we choose whether or not to obey any other command.

Romans 5:6-8 - Christ is the example to husbands. He loved us while we were yet sinners, not because we were so loveable. He couldn't stop Himself. He **chose** to do what was needed.

Titus 2:4 - Older women should admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children. Ladies can learn to love their husbands and children. Bible love is not primarily an emotion. It will result in emotions, but it is results from the will.

Luke 6:27,28 - We are commanded to love our enemies. Loving one's enemy is about what it would take to put love in some marriages! But what does it mean to love an enemy? We do not uncontrollably "fall" in love. Rather, we **choose** to do what is best for them.

Love involves a **commitment**. It is not an accident. Love requires choosing to do what is best for one another. This takes deliberate effort. You do not just get married and

automatically “live happily ever after.” Such ideas make nice fairy tales. But that’s all they are: fairy tales!

### *Applications*

#### **Couples can learn to love one another.**

Some think love just happens and cannot be controlled - you “fall in love” or out of love.

Sometimes one says, “I just don’t love her/him anymore.” They may think nothing can be done except to get a divorce. But an appropriate response would be, “Have you repented? Have you confessed that sin to God and asked forgiveness?”

Lack of love does not excuse one from responsibility of marriage. It is a sin! What is the Bible solution to sin? Repent, confess it to God and to the one you sinned against. Then do right!

#### **When a marriage lacks love, we choose whether or not to put it in!**

When we realize we can **choose** to love, then we realize we **can put love into** a marriage. And if we fail to put it in, we **sin**.

Christ initiated love toward the church when we were sinners not acting lovingly toward Him. This is the example the husband should follow. Likewise, young women should be taught to love their husbands. You learn to love. If your marriage lacks love, you put it in.

**This responsibility to initiate love rests on both spouses, specifically on the husband.** Most people think the wife is responsible to put love in the marriage. She is responsible, but the

husband is as much or more so. The command is emphasized to the man. He is to love the wife and put love into the relationship, as Christ first loved the church.

### C. Love Must Be Expressed in Both Word And Action.

The way to choose to love is to choose to say and do what is best for one's spouse.

#### *Bible Principles*

#### **Love should be expressed by what we say.**

Ephesians 5:25 - Husbands should love as Christ loved the church. But Christ states His love for the church (Ephesians 5:2; John 3:16). So, husbands and wives should express love for one another in words.

This does not require an overwhelming romantic "feeling" that wells up and can't help but be expressed. Remember, love is a choice of the will.

We choose to state: "I love you. I am committed to this marriage and to your welfare."

#### **Love should be expressed by what we do.**

I John 5:2,3 - Love for others requires us to love God and keep His commandments. Keeping God's commands is loving God.

I John 3:18 - We must love, not just in words, but in deed and in truth. This is a vital principle in every home. We ought to say loving things, but that is not enough. We must **act in love**.

#### *Applications*

**Couples should show love in how they treat one another.**

Other topics will emphasize the duty of husbands and wives in the home. The husband provides for the family and uses his authority for the good of the group. The wife keeps the home and submits in love to the husband. **That is Biblical love.**

Love is also shown in treating one another with respect. We speak respectfully. We show common politeness and decency. We consider one another's views.

Love for God and for our spouse must motivate obedience to all God's teachings about marriage. This is the basis of obedience to all Divine commands (Matthew 22:37-39).

### **Couples need to show love by being affectionate.**

I Corinthians 7:3 - You owe your spouse "affection" (NKJV). The emphasis is on sexual expression. But couples need to learn that sexual affection is just the culmination of other forms of affection. Without other forms of affection, sexual union is hollow, lacking beauty and meaning. When a couple is affectionate throughout the day, sexual affection has true beauty.

You say, "I'm just not an affectionate person. My parents were never affectionate either." Then **choose to change!** It may be harder for you, but love is a choice not a mood. You can change and become affectionate, just like you can change anything else necessary to please God.

This affection is "due" one another. It is not just an emotion or mood that overwhelms us, so we involuntarily start saying and doing sweet things. We should do and say kind things and express affection by **choice**. Make a point to remember to say, "I love you" and to be intimate.

Don't wait till some mood or force compels us. We can and should choose to act these ways.

## D. Love Requires Giving & Self-sacrifice.

**Giving of self is the essence of love.**

*Bible principles*

John 3:16 - God so loved the world that He **gave** His only-begotten Son.

Ephesians 5:25 - Jesus loved the church and **gave** Himself for it.

I John 3:14-18 - If you see your brother in need and don't **give** what is needed, you don't have love.

Romans 12:20 - Loving your enemy requires **giving** food and drink when needed.

**A fundamental requirement of a good marriage is a willingness to give of ourselves for the good of others.**

The decision to act properly and lovingly toward our spouse should not depend on how our spouse acts, let alone how a mood hits us. We must choose to give of ourselves, because it is good for others and pleasing to God.

This is fundamental to being unselfish. The selfish person doesn't want to give in or sacrifice. They want to please themselves.

*Giving and self-sacrifice is especially essential in solving conflict.*

**The fundamental lesson of Christ's love is to give up our own desires for the good of others, even when they are not acting the way we think they should.**

In time of conflict, we say, "I'll do right or improve if he/she will too." If an act is

beneficial for others, love requires us to **do it** regardless of what they are doing. If we have been wrong, love requires us to **admit it**, regardless of whether or not they have admitted their errors.

**Even if we are convinced our spouse has caused a problem, we should ask ourselves honestly what we can do to help improve it.**

This does not mean ignoring sin. Jesus did not cause our sin problem, and He did not compromise with sin. What he did was sacrifice Himself to provide a solution to the problem we caused. He did not just criticize our sin; He became involved to provide a solution. He did not do everything for us, but he made sure we had a way whereby we could overcome the problem.

A spouse may think, “he/she caused this problem, so let him/her solve it.” Even if that is true, is it helpful? Instead think, “What can I offer to do - how can I become involved - so as to help resolve this problem?” Instead of saying, “Why don’t you do this?” say, “Why don’t you and I work on this **together**? What can I do to help?”

As long as neither spouse will take the first step toward a good marriage, the marriage can never be good. Each one must be committed to a good marriage. This requires us to give in at times where we wish we did not have to (assuming we do not sin). Each must be willing to sacrifice and give of themselves for the good of the marriage. (1 John 4:9,19; Acts 20:35; Luke 10:25-37).

*To improve your marriage, start with improving yourself.*

**If you are not married:**

Make up your mind to marry only a person who will follow the Bible teaching about marriage. And then work to **become** the kind of person who will **attract the kind of person you want to marry!**

If you are a half-hearted Christian, half-heartedly involved in the church, practicing personal habits that are immoral or doubtful, do not expect to attract a faithful, dedicated Christian to marry! A dedicated Christian does not seek to marry a half-hearted Christian. To attract a faithful, dedicated Christian, you must **be** a faithful, dedicated Christian.

Likewise, if you have attitudes and habits that would hinder a good marriage, start now to change to become the kind of person who can work for a good marriage.

**Likewise, if you are married:**

If you are having problems in your marriage, do not expect your spouse to solve the problem. **Begin by examining yourself!** Most marriage problems result from faults on the part of **both** parties. Rarely is one person alone the whole cause of the problem.

I Peter 3:1,2 - You cannot control what your spouse does. You can only control what you do. If you become what you should be, you will set the example to help your spouse become what he/she should be. Do not wait for them to change. Start doing all God says for you to do and you will have the best chance you can have for a good marriage.

Begin now to study the Bible teaching about the home, then conform your thoughts, words, and deed to that teaching. Become a faithful Christian and become the kind of person you need to be to have a Biblical marriage.

*Differences we think we cannot tolerate should be resolved before marriage.*

Some differences we may be able to live with. But if we know a person has a habit or characteristic that we find intolerable, especially if it is sinful, either resolve it before marriage or don't marry the person.

**Do not marry a person thinking you will change them.**

Often girls meet guys with immoral habits or disgusting characteristics and decide to reform them. People say women can twist a man around their little finger. And women believe it.

Or men think, since they are head of the family, the wife will have to change to please them. But even without being head of the family, women can make your life miserable a thousand different ways.

If you are convinced your partner must change in order to have a happy marriage, then the time to make this known and resolve it is **before you marry them** - better yet, before you even become seriously emotionally attached. Once you are married, you are committed for life, and no amount of wishful thinking can change that (Romans 7:2-3).

**If a person has serious *moral* problems, don't try to change them by *dating* them.**

Explain what it is that troubles you, and encourage them to work with stronger, older Christians of their own gender. Then distance yourself from the relationship, till they prove they will change by their own choice. They must change, not because you want them to change, but because God requires it and changing is the right thing to do. Otherwise, they may go through the motions of change just to please you, then revert after marriage. Or, you may become so emotionally attached that you marry them despite the problem, and then live to regret it.

**E. Learn to Love, by Thinking, Speaking, and Acting for the Wellbeing of the Other Person.**

How do you put love into a marriage where it is lacking? Instead of thinking first and foremost about what you want, act for their good and the good of your relationship. You

choose to do what is best for the other person! That is Biblical love.

**The key to putting love into marriage and keeping it in marriage is to do and keep doing the things that led you to love one another to begin with!**

The reason couples stop loving one another is that they stop doing the things that led them to love one another! The incredible thing is that most of us are so foolish that we can't see that. This discussion involves a measure of judgment and wisdom, but it surely harmonizes with Bible principles.

*How do couples learn to love in the first place?*

Consider: What did you do that led you to decide that you loved one another and wanted to get married? We may act a certain way to nourish love before marriage, then we get married and quit doing those things! If you want more love in your marriage now, go back and do the same things again before you married.

**Couples learn to love by saying and doing things to please the other person.**

Before marriage, the young man sends the girl gifts, flowers, cards. After marriage, he stops.

Before marriage, the young lady chooses her clothes, her perfume, her hair style deliberately to please him. After marriage, she says, "All my lady friends think this looks good on me. If he doesn't like it, something's wrong with him." Is that the way you thought before marriage?

Before marriage you took the time to listen to him/her. After marriage, you don't have the time.

Before marriage, did you show politeness and respect: hold the door for her, let her go

first, say “please” and “thank you”? Do you do those things now?

Before marriage, did you compliment her hair, her dress? Did you use expressions of affection? Why not now?

Before marriage, you remembered her birthday and other special days. What about now?

Before marriage, you went places and did things together. What about after marriage?

We know what cultivates love in a relationship. Why, after marriage, do we become brain dead? Go back and act the way you acted that led you into love. Don't wait for feelings or a special mood to strike you. Make a deliberate choice to do these things - love is a commitment.

### **Couples learn to love by taking time to be together.**

Many times, I have heard older couples say, “To keep love in a marriage you need to keep dating one another.” The point is that you **make appointments to spend time visiting together and doing things to please the other person.** That's how you learned to love, and that's how you stay in love.

Make an **appointment** once a week (at least once a month) to spend time primarily visiting with your spouse. And then once a year or so, take a few days to get away doing things together, talking, visiting, and just focusing on one another.

All of us live by some kind of schedule. We budget out time. Discuss your schedule with your spouse once a week (or at least once a month) and arrange an **appointment** for an evening or a couple of hours together. Do the things you did that led you into love.

*We lose love, because we stop doing the things that produced love to begin with!*  
Many couples have excuses why they don't do these things.

\* **“We don't have time.”**

Did you have time before marriage? Why did you have time then, but not now? The answer is: You made the time, because it was important to you to be with him/her.

You have time to visit on the phone with friends or read a book, etc for 2-3 hours a week. But you can't spend that time with your spouse instead? What does this say?

Find someone to take the kids for an evening, trade babysitting with friends.

Make an appointment and don't break it except for absolute emergencies. If someone wants you to do something else say, “We have an appointment that evening.”

\* **“We can't afford it.”**

You can't afford not to. Your marriage needs love. You must pay the price.

You don't have to spend a lot of money. Go for a walk in the park or the mall.

What did you do and where did you go before you got married? Go there and do it again!

The point is to spend time together.

\* **“We don't enjoy the same things.”**

She likes to shop, he can't stand to shop. He likes ball games, she can't stand ball games. Etc.

What did you do before you got married? You found things to do then! Do them again. Did you shop with her before you got married? If you did, what not do it again?

A lot of couples dress up and go out to eat together, or for a Sunday drive.

The point is: If the object is to please the other person, to strengthen your relationship, and to show the other person that you care, you find something to do and a way to do it, just like you did before you got married. Forget the excuses. You've already proved you can do it. Do it again.

**What is missing in all these excuses? What is the fundamental problem?**

When we make these excuses, we are saying we don't spend time together **because the other person and our relationship with that person are not important enough.**

If you don't have time or money for one another and don't enjoy doing things together, how did you end up getting married? Before you got married, you found the time and the money and you found things to do. If you don't do it now, it's because your marriage relationship is not important enough. You don't **care** like you used to. We may not say it or think it, but our actions show it. And at least subconsciously, our spouse feels it. And that's why our marriages lack love!

Before marriage, you took time and money and you found things to do together, because you **cared** enough about one another. So, the way to come to love one another again and to continue to love one another is to go back and do the things that led you to love one another in the first place.

Your marriage needs love. You have a command of God to put it in. Do what you did that led you to love to begin with.

=====

Why should married couples be responsible and honest? How important are trust, truth, keeping promises, paying debts, and controlling spending?

Why avoid deceit, lying, and uncontrolled anger?

## **VI. Responsibility, Honesty, and Self-Control.**

Major marriage problems often are caused by irresponsible conduct, especially regarding honesty, financial matters, and uncontrolled temper.

### A. Husbands and Wives Must Tell the Truth and Keep their Promises.

**God requires us to tell the truth.**

*Bible Teaching.*

Proverbs 6:16-19 - There are 7 things God hates, and two of them involve lying and deceit: “a lying tongue,” and a “false witness that tells lies.”

Proverbs 30:8 - Remove far from me falsehood and lies. No servant of God wants a close relationship with one who practices lying and deceit.

Revelation 21:8,27; 22:14,15 - All liars will have their part in the lake of fire outside the holy city.

Ephesians 4:25 - Putting away lying, “Let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor,” for we are members of one another. In no relationship is this more true than in marriage.

Romans 1:29,32 - Deceit is a twin brother of lying. It involves deliberately attempting to

lead people to believe things that are not true. Those who practice it, and those who approve of others who practice it, both are worthy of death.

Psalm 40:4 - Do not have respect for those who turn aside to lies.

(John 8:44; Colossians 3:9; Psalm 24:3-5; I Peter 2:1,22; 3:10; Matthew 15:18-20; Proverbs 19:22; Exodus 20:16; Acts 5:1-9).

### *Applications*

If we really understand this Bible teaching, why would we ever be dishonest with our marriage companion? Lying and deceit are always sinful. Why should we practice them toward those whom God has commanded us to love?

Marriage is based on mutual trust. When you sneak and deceive your spouse to get your way, you destroy the foundation of marriage and you sin against your spouse and against God.

And why would we marry anyone known to tell lies? If the person you are considering marrying lies to you or others, break off the relationship. A person who lies can never be trusted.

And if he/she lies to other people, don't think they won't lie to you. They will lie to anyone, when they think it is to their advantage. You never know when they are lying and when they are telling the truth. Why choose to live with that all your life?

**God requires us to keep our promises.**

### *Bible Teaching*

Hebrews 10:23 - God is faithful to His promises to us. This is just one of many characteristics God requires **us** to possess, because it is a fundamental characteristic

**He** possesses.

Genesis 29:18-28 - Laban agreed to give Rachel to Jacob for his wife if he would work seven years. But when the time came, he gave Leah instead. This is described as deceit (v25). Deceit characterized this whole family, and trouble repeatedly resulted. When a person can keep a promise but knowingly refuses to do so, that is deceitful.

Numbers 30:1,2 - The Lord commanded if a man vows a vow to the Lord, or swears an oath to bind himself by some agreement, he shall not break his word; he shall do according to all that proceeds out of his mouth (Proverbs 22:25).

James 5:12 - Do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath. But let your "Yes," be "Yes," and your "No," "No," lest you fall into judgment (Matthew 5:33-37; 23:16-22; II Corinthians 1:15-20).

The fact we don't take oaths under the New Testament does not mean that keeping our word is less needed in the New Testament than in the Old Testament; rather, it is more necessary. In the New Testament, giving your word is binding, like the Old Testament oaths were binding.

Romans 1:31,32 - Among those worthy of death are "covenant-breakers" (KJV & ASV). The NKJV says, "untrustworthy" - surely, one who does not keep his word is not trustworthy.

Matthew 7:12 (22:36-39) - The Golden Rule requires us to do to others as we want them to do to us. If it bothers you for people to make promises to you that they don't keep, then don't treat others this way. (See also: Proverbs 20:25; Ecclesiastes 5:2-6; Malachi 2:13-16; Jeremiah 34:8-22; Ezekiel 17:12-16; Galatians 3:15; Joshua 2:9-21; I Kings 2:8,42).

## Applications

Sometimes extenuating circumstances might release us from the promise.

(1) We may have had made a **conditional** promise. If the condition is not met, we are not obligated. (Sometimes conditions are understood, even if not stated).

(2) Physical circumstances beyond our control may make it impossible to do as planned (like sickness keeping us from a job, church meeting, etc) (Luke 7:41,42; Matthew 18:24-34).

(3) The person to whom we made the commitment may agree to change the agreement (Proverbs 6:1-5; Luke 7:41,42; Matthew 18:24-34).

(4) If we committed ourselves to do something sinful, we must repent of having made the commitment, and then not keep it (Matthew 21:28-30).

But we must never make promises that we have no intention of keeping. Having made a promise, we must not knowingly fail to keep it when we are able to keep it.

If a person does not honor his word and keep his promises, what reason do you have to believe he/she will keep the marriage vows? What evidence is there that he/she will stay with you till death or remain faithfully sexually?

Few things do more harm to the marriage relationship than a partner who cannot be trusted to tell the truth and keep his/her word.

### B. Husbands and Wives Should Pay Their Debts and Control Spending.

Money matters are one of the biggest causes of strife in marriage. Often the problem is

caused by over-commitment to debt.

*Bible Principles.*

**Christians must pay their debts.**

II Corinthians 8:21 - Provide for things that are honorable, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men. Being honorable in dealing with men requires paying our debts.

Psalm 37:21 - One who borrows and then does not pay again is wicked.

James 5:12 - Let your yea be yea and your nay, nay. If you don't intend to pay for a thing, don't promise that you will. If you do promise, then you are obligated to keep that commitment.

Romans 13:7,8 - Not only must we pay our taxes, but render to all what is due. This does not mean it is wrong to borrow. But when the payments come due, you must pay what you owe.

For Christians, there can be no doubt about whether or not debts will be paid. Failure to pay a debt is one form of dishonesty and failing to keep our promises (James 5:4).

**One reason people are overwhelmed by debt is desire for material things.**

Matthew 13:22 - In the parable of the sower, the thorny soil represents people in whom God's word is choked by the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches. These problems cause much marital strife and destroy marriages, as well as making people unfaithful to God.

I John 2:15-17 - Do not love the world, nor the things in the world. People are often led

to buy things they cannot afford because of lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, or pride of life. We see these things that we think will satisfy our desires or that will make us feel important. We want what others have. But if we love the world, the love of God is not in us.

I Timothy 6:6-10 - Those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greed, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. Instead, we need to learn to be content with basic necessities.

### **Applications.**

Just because others have something doesn't mean your family needs it. Often a couple buys things they don't really need and can't really afford, then there is arguing about how the debts will be paid. Or both husband and wife work long hours to buy material things, but as a result they neglect their responsibilities to one another, to their children, to the church, etc.

Couples need to learn from the early days of their marriage to make a budget and live by it. Make a list of the things you need in order to live and how much each one will cost you. If you can't afford to pay for a thing and still spend the time and money you need with your family and in God's work, then learn to do without it.

Avoid debt whenever possible. Never make a debt unless you have every reason to believe you can pay it. If you make a debt, pay it.

If a person has demonstrated that they cannot control their spending and cannot learn to live on their income, then don't marry them. Or wait till they grow up and demonstrate in their life the basic honesty and self-control required to live within their means and pay their debts.

(Luke 12:15-22; Matthew 6:19-33)

### C. Husbands and Wives Must Control Their Anger.

#### *Bible Teaching.*

Ephesians 4:26 - Being angry is not necessarily sinful, but we must control our anger or it will lead us into sin (Mark 3:5).

Page | 49

James 1:19,20 - Be slow to speak, slow to wrath, because man's anger does not work God's righteousness. Learn not to get angry quickly, and do not speak quickly when you are angry. You can learn to control your temper (Proverbs 14:17).

Proverbs 29:11,20 - A foolish man utters all his anger and is hasty in words. Sometimes people say, "I just say what I think," as though this justifies their sinful statements. But some things should not be thought, let alone said (Matthew 12:35-37). And wise men learn to control their speech. Only a foolish man says every thought that comes to his mind, especially when he is angry (Ephesians 4:31-32); Proverbs 16:32; 25:28).

Proverbs 15:1,28 - When you are angry or your spouse is angry, study to answer (think about it carefully), and respond calmly.

Proverbs 22:24,25 - Make no friendship with an angry man, and with a furious man do not go, lest you learn his ways and set a snare for your soul.

#### *Applications.*

#### **Failure to control one's temper leads to sin and ruins many marriages.**

Uncontrolled anger often leads to sin against others, especially those closest to us. It can even lead to violence and spouse or child abuse. If you have a temper problem, you must learn to control it if you ever expect to have a good home, to please God, or to receive eternal life.

If a person is known to have a bad temper that he/she often does not control, and especially if they are known to get violent, why marry them? Let them learn to grow up and prove they can control themselves over a long period of time, or marry someone else.

**You say, “He/she said they were sorry and asked me to forgive them.”**

Evil people often take advantage of the kindness of innocent people, especially young women. They lead you to believe that, if they say they are sorry, you must take them back and continue the relationship, even if you are not married.

Apologizing is good. But every liar will say they are sorry, when you catch them and prove unquestionable that they lied. People who frequently lose their temper will be sorry after they calm down. But real repentance requires changing, not just being sorry (Acts 26:20). Such characteristics are habits engrained in the character. They can be changed, but it will take time and motivation. Be careful by risking your soul and your happiness by being involved in a relationship with such a person.

If they apologize and promise to change, you should forgive. But that does not require you to marry them or even to continue the relationship. Forgiving a person and marrying them are two different issues. Are you required to marry every person who asks you forgiveness? You are not required to marry anybody! You have the right to decide not to marry a person on any grounds you choose.

If he/she goes a year or two without committing such sins, you may have grounds to reconsider. But meanwhile, break off the relationship and let them prove themselves willing to truly change. This keeps you free from emotional bond that could bring you ruin.

**II Peter 1:6; Galatians 5:22,23 - Self control is both a fruit of the Spirit and a virtue**

**one must add to their faith.**

Before they marry, a man and a woman should both be mature and responsible enough to tell the truth, keep their promises, control their temper, and control their finances. If you are considering marrying a person who lacks self-control, do not think it will get better after marriage - it will probably get worse! Marry someone else, or at least wait until he/she grows up and enough time has passed to prove they have a pattern of responsible conduct.

If you are already married and have these problems, **grow up!** Study the Bible and make a commitment before God to change. Then keep your word and change.

=====

What effect can friends, in-laws, family, and relatives have on a marriage?  
How important can the influence of companions be?

## **VII. Friends and In-Laws.**

When you marry, you are marrying one person. But with him/her you “inherit” a whole new set of family members and friends. You will enter a close connection with his/her relatives and friends, and he/she will enter a relationship with your relatives and friends. Sometimes this leads to problems.

### A. Sometimes, There Will Be a Conflict With In-Laws and Friends.

Genesis 2:24 - When a man and woman marry, they form a new family separated from the families of either of their parents. The husband is to leave the parents and form a new and stronger tie with his wife.

Ephesians 5:22-25 - The new family has a head: the husband. Neither the man’s

parents nor the wife's parents are the head of this new family. Friends and family may make suggestions or give Biblical instruction or even rebuke when needed. But the husband is the leader of the new family, and his decisions should give primary consideration to the needs and wishes of his wife.

But some parents do not respect this and try to continue making decisions for their children as they have in the past. Sometimes the son or daughter has trouble "cutting the apron strings" and is too heavily influenced by his/her parents. The new husband may allow his parents to make decisions for him or may make choices on the basis of what pleases his parents instead of what meets the needs of his wife. Or the wife may seek to submit to her parents, instead of to her husband. Such interference by family or friends may cause serious conflict in the new marriage.

Avoiding or solving this problem will take understanding of God's will and firm resolve on the part of the new couple. They must discuss the problem, preferably before marriage. Make sure you have a mutual understanding about what your relationship will be to family and friends. If you see evidence of a problem, discuss it. Then the new husband and wife must confront the troublesome family member, explain the Bible teaching, and take a firm stand.

Sometimes the only solution may be to move some distance away from the parents.

#### B. Your Companion Will Bring to the Marriage Habits and Attitudes Learned from His/Her Family and Friends.

Even if your mate's family or friends make no direct efforts to interfere in your marriage, your companion will come to the marriage with patterns of thinking, acting, and speaking that he/she developed from parents, relatives, and friends. Observing his/her family and friends may help you understand him/her and know what to expect.

#### **The effect of family influence.**

Ezekiel 16:44 - Like mother, like daughter. Or as we sometimes say it, "Like father, like son." All of us are influenced by what we grew up with. We tend to continue to relate to people according to the habits we established growing up and according to the role models we observed.

I Kings 15:3 - This and many similar verses describe people who were good or bad like their parents were. When children grow up with parents who have a good marriage, treat one another well, and are good parents, their children tend to act the same way in their marriage. But if the parents are alcoholic, abusive, or negligent, the children may act that way, even if they hated the way their parents acted. They lack a good role model to follow and may simply not know how to act differently.

It is possible to be different from what a person experienced while growing up, but this is difficult. If you do not like the way your future spouse's parents act in their home, or you do not like the way your future spouse treats their family, then take care. It will be very difficult for your spouse to change these patterns, and you need to spend lots of time making sure he/she is determined and able to be different.

Nehemiah 13:23,24 - Both parents influence children. If you have a conflict with your spouse's family, this needs to be dealt with thoroughly, preferably before marriage. If you marry this person, you will not only have to deal with their family themselves, you will also have to deal with their influence on your mate.

### **The effect of friends.**

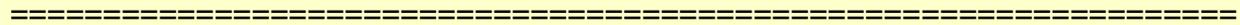
Proverbs 13:20 - Companionship with fools will make us foolish, but association with wise men will make us wise. Christians realize that our **associations, especially our closest companions, will have a major influence on the kind of life we lead.** Evil companions corrupt our morals (I Corinthians 15:33).

When you marry, you inherit your companion’s friends. If you marry a person who has a habit of choosing bad companions or “running with the world,” those people will become your companions too. If you marry a person who shows a pattern of wise choice of friends, then both of you will be able to associate with godly, moral people.

Proverbs 29:27 - An unjust man is an abomination to the righteous. But the ways of a righteous man are an abomination to the wicked! Before you marry a person, you need to consider how well you will get along with their friends and relatives and how well your spouse will get along with your family and friends.

Will your companion’s friends and in-laws be the kind of people you will want to be visiting with frequently, especially after you have children? Does the person you are considering marrying make wise choice of his/her closest friends? And how will your spouse react to your family and friends?

Discuss these matters carefully before marriage and after marriage. Determine to marry a person only if he/she shows a commitment to good relationships and good influences. After marriage, continue to study God’s Word together and reevaluate the influence your family and friends have on you, on your marriage, and on your children.



What roles has God assigned to husbands and wives? Who should be the head to lead the family? How important is love in exercising authority?  
Who should work to provide income? Is the role of homemaker demeaning?

**VIII. Roles of Husband and Wife**

Traditionally and Biblically, the roles of husband and wife were fairly well defined. God created men and women different and assigned them different roles.

Modern philosophies, however, pressure modern families to believe these roles will not work in modern society. Indeed, they may not work - if we want to have the kind of family people in the world have. But if our primary goal in marriage is to serve God, then we will find the roles defined in the Bible are the **only** ones that will work!

Biblical roles require the following:

A. The Wife Must Submit to Her Husband, But He Must Rule With Love.

**The Bible teaches wives to submit to their husbands.**

Genesis 3:16 - God decreed that the man should rule over his wife. This is neither the invention of men nor the product of evolution. It is a decree of Almighty God!

Ephesians 5:22-24 - The wife should submit to her husband as the church should submit to Christ. And, she must submit in “everything.” She has no more right to pick and choose which decisions she finds acceptable or reasonable, than the church does regarding Jesus’ decisions. The only exception is if her husband tells her to do something that would be sinful to do; then she “must obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29).

Further, the church should cooperate with Jesus’ authority in every way possible, submitting willingly out of love (John 14:15). Likewise, the wife should not try to look for loopholes or sneak behind her husband’s back or manipulate his decisions by devious means. The command to love her husband (Titus 2:4) should lead her to seek to know his will so she can obey it.

I Peter 3:1-6 - If her husband is disobedient to God and even if he misuses his authority, even then the wife is not justified in refusing to submit. In fact, this just gives more reason why she should submit, so she can set him a good example (Romans 12:17-21).

(See also Colossians 3:18; Titus 2:5; I Corinthians 11:3, 8-12).

**The Bible teaches husbands to use their authority with love.**

**Ephesians 5:25-29, 33 - While the husband is head of the wife, he must also rule with love as Jesus does for the church.**

A man who loves his wife will not use his authority just to get his own way and please himself. Instead, he will rule for the good of all (I Corinthians 13:5). This often requires him to sacrifice his own desires for the good of the group, even as Jesus did in dying for the church.

Further, the husband should make a reasonable effort to consult his wife in decisions that affect her; he should take her will into consideration. God grants the church the right to influence His decisions by our prayers. For a husband to refuse to do this would be failing to love his wife as himself: you would not like people to make major decisions that affect you without your input. Likewise, using family funds to do as you please, without careful consideration of the wife's needs and views, is selfish and unloving.

This does not mean the husband always does what the wife wants. He does what he honestly concludes is best; but making good decisions requires a willingness to receive input from those who must follow the decisions.

Again, Jesus acted with love for the church, even when we were in sin (Romans 5:6-10). Therefore, the husband must not be unloving toward his wife, even when the wife is unloving, just as Jesus did for the church.

**I Peter 3:7 - The husband should strive to understand the needs of the wife and value her, so that he can make his decisions accordingly.**

He should honor and cherish her (Ephesians 5:29). The wife should not be treated as

property or a slave, but as a valued and respected companion.

The fact the husband is the leader does not mean the wife is any less valuable or important. In God's plan, value and importance are not determined by authority, but by the service we perform (Matthew 20:20-28). Men and women were each uniquely created by God to fill the role He planned for them. Though their authority and abilities differ, each is equally valuable and important in his/her role (I Corinthians 12:14-22).

Young people, do not marry someone unless you are truly convinced that he/she will practice Biblical roles. Young lady, God will require you to submit to your husband for the rest of your life, even when you don't like his decisions and even if you think he is unreasonable. The marriage commitment must be to "love, honor, and **obey**." Consider that carefully long before you say, "I do."

Young man, God will require you to love your wife and make decisions for her good without bitterness, even when you think she is not submitting to you properly. When you choose a marriage companion, choose someone whose example and conduct indicates understanding of Bible roles and commitment to follow them.

This is another reason why it is so important to really take your time and be sure you know a person well before you marry them.

B. The Husband is Responsible to Provide Family income and the Wife is Responsible to be The Homemaker.

**The Bible often states the husband's responsibility to provide family income.**

Genesis 3:17-19 - From the beginning the man was responsible to labor with his hands to provide bread. A man who is able to do this but will not, is lazy and foolish (Proverbs 24:30-34). (I Thessalonians 4:10-12; II Thessalonians 3:10).

Ephesians 5:28-31 - The man should labor, not just to provide for himself, but also to “nourish and cherish” his wife as he does his own body. These terms including providing and caring for her, as well as protecting her.

I Timothy 5:8 - The man who will not provide for his own, especially his own household, is worse than an unbeliever. Yet, all across the country there are men who fail to provide for their families as they ought to. Even though they are able-bodied, they live off of welfare, or off of relatives. A man who has married should not resort to his parents to provide for his family. It is **His** responsibility. Parents who continue funding him or her in their marriage relationship are only making the matter even more difficult for their children. They need to grow up and learn responsibility. A lot of families suffer because of the lack of responsibility on the part of the husband.

The Bible is filled with examples of men who were employed in various occupations by which they provided for their families, including occupations that often took them away from their families through the day. This includes, sailors, shepherds, physicians, tax collectors, carpenters, fishermen, preachers, etc. There is no passage in Scripture, however, that teaches wives, especially if they are mothers, that they are similarly obligated to leave their families and work to provide income.

### **Mothers are instructed to be homemakers, managing the home.**

#### *Bible Teaching.*

Genesis 2:18 - The wife was created to be a companion and helper to her husband. She finds her fulfillment, not in competing with her husband in his work nor in taking his responsibilities, but in assisting him (Titus 2:4).

I Timothy 5:14 - She should be taught by the older women to be a homemaker (NKJV; “worker at home.”

Psalm 113:9 - She should rejoice and praise God for her role as mother and keeper of a home. Husbands ought to praise their wives for fulfilling this role.

Proverbs 7:11,12 - It is a shame for a woman to gad about instead of staying at home. Some women insist on taking the family car and spend all day or night shopping or just running around town. This is just plain foolish, and will put a strain on the marriage relationship. Husbands and wives should mutually agree on times and limits of shopping, running errands, etc. In this day and time, it very dangerous even in broad daylight for the wife to be running around town alone. It would be safer if possible for both the husband and wife to do their shopping together.

One of the best places for a sex offender to look for women alone is at the local laundry. Husbands generally are bored with such places. The Bible says to be careful for nothing (Philippians 4:6). Communication between husband and wife on these matters is very essential.

John 10:11-14 - Some work cannot be done by one who is simply hired, as well as it can be done by one who has a personal relationship. What is true of caring for mere animals would surely also be true of caring for our family members. Ladies, no one can love and care for your husbands and your children like you can. Can you hire another woman to fulfill your role as a companion to your husband and submit to him in your place? Then why think you can hire a day-care center, babysitter, or other hireling to love and care for your children in your place?

#### *Applications.*

The roles of wife, mother, and homemaker are not the only responsibilities God requires of women. He also requires them to teach His Word, be active in the church, care for the needy, visit the sick, and be diligent in prayer and Bible study, etc. Some of these activities may even briefly take her away from her house. But it should be clear that filling all her God-given roles would constitute a full-time job for any mother.

The Bible simply does not approve of the idea of modern society that family roles are to be shared equally or interchanged or hired out to others. Most of the major problems that exist in modern homes can be traced to a failure of husband, wife, or both to understand and properly fill their God-given role.

There may be circumstances in which the husband or wife is unable to do their work, so their spouse may take the duties of a companion in an emergency circumstance. And wives may find ways to contribute to family income without leaving their children or neglecting their families or their homes. But the fact remains that God said the man is responsible to be the head of the family and the one to provide the income, and He said that the woman is to be in subjection and is to be the homemaker. Yet, all across our country there are families in deep trouble because husbands and/or wives neglect their God-given duties because they spend so much time doing things other than what God requires them to do.

Young ladies, make sure you marry a young man who is willing and able to provide for you and the family. If he doesn't hold down a job or doesn't show clear evidence of being able to provide an adequate living, or if he might encourage or even expect you to work so you cannot stay home and be a mother to your children, you need to resolve this before marriage. And while you should prepare to provide for yourself if you cannot find the right young man to marry, nevertheless you need to organize your education and lifestyle so that, when the right man does come along, you are prepared and willing to be a fulltime homemaker.

Young men, you make sure that the young woman you marry is committed to staying home and being a fulltime mother to your children. If she is career-minded or expects a lifestyle that you can't provide, make a serious effort to resolve this before marriage.

And throughout marriage, avoid making financial commitments that require two incomes. Some couples, early in marriage, develop commitments and attitudes that

encourage the wife to continue working outside the home even after the children come. The best way to avoid these problems is to never put yourselves in the situation where you must have two incomes to make ends meet.

=====

What principles should parents follow in raising children? How important are Bible teaching, love, and authority? Should father and mother use punishments and rewards? What about spanking?

## **IX. Raising Children**

Children are a stewardship and a blessing from God. God expects us to train our children to become what He wants them to be, and He will judge us for the work we do as parents.

Yet, children remain one of the biggest problems many families face. Being a good parent requires a good preparation and diligent application. The Bible gives instructions that, properly applied, would solve most serious problems.

### A. Parents Must Train Their Children to Serve God.

Parents must take time to instruct their children in God's Word.

Proverbs 1:8 - Children should hear the instruction of their fathers and not forsake the law of their mothers. Both mothers and fathers should be involved in instructing their children.

Ephesians 6:4 - Fathers should bring their children up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. The idea that fathers may "leave it up to the mother to train the children" is unscriptural. The church may help, but the teaching must not ultimately be left up to the

church. Because the **father** is the head of the family, God gives him the **ultimate responsibility** to see that the **children are correctly trained**. If the children are not being taught the Word of God, especially about love, prayer, devotion, responsibility, respect, loyalty, dedication, etc. you can be sure that the devil will teach them in school about hate, sex, drugs, disrespect, disobedience, etc. Children will grow up to please God and honor their parents, or grow up to be lawbreakers, and cause many heartaches to their parents.

II Timothy 3:15 - From childhood, Timothy had been taught the Scriptures, because they could make him wise unto salvation. Parents must begin at very **young** ages to train children properly. Too many people neglect the early training of their children, then they try to correct the children when they become teenagers and face serious problems. The problems should have been solved - and would have been much easier to solve - years earlier.

Genesis 18:19 - Abraham commanded his family after him to do God's will (Deuteronomy 4:9-10; Psalm 78:4-8).

Deuteronomy 6:6-9 - We should diligently teach God's Word to our children, talking of them throughout the day. We need set times during the week for teaching children God's Word. But we also need to teach throughout the day as situations arise where we can apply Bible principles.

II Timothy 1:5 - The faith Timothy had, first existed in his mother and grandmother. Training children properly requires both a good example and good instruction. Many parents tell their children how to live, yet the children do not serve God faithfully because they see that the parents don't practice what they preach. (Malachi 2:15).

#### B. Parents Should Show Affection and Make Decisions With Love.

Psalm 127:3-5; 128:3-4 - Parents should appreciate children as a blessing from God.

Some parents act as though caring for children in an unbearable drudgery. They grumble and complain about their kids. They may abuse them, desert them, seek other people to take care of them, or even murder them before they are born. Instead, we ought to let them know we love and appreciate them (Genesis 33:5).

Titus 2:4 - Young women should be taught to love their children. Most people will naturally love their children; even so, there are many aspects of love that we must be taught to practice. There should be no “unwanted children,” not because we have aborted them before birth, but because we have learned to **love** them.

I John 3:18 - Love shows itself by what we do as well as what we say. We must tell our children we love them, put our arms around them, etc. But we must also act in ways that show we love them.

Colossians 3:21 - Do not provoke the child to discouragement. Often parents continually belittle their children, criticizing and condemning them, with never a word of praise or appreciation. Breaking a child’s spirit and destroying their sense of worth is one way to provoke them to discouragement.

I Corinthians 13:5 - Love does not seek its own. If we love our children, we will not make rules just to please ourselves so we can get our own way. It is not good for the child to be allowed just to do what they want, but neither is it good if we ignore the best interest of the child to satisfy our own selfish desires. We must make rules for the good of all. And when we must punish a child, let us exercise self-control to be sure we act and speak for the good of the child, not because we have lost our temper.

### C. Parents Must Exercise Authority In The Home.

Our society generally frowns on authority, rules, law, and duty. We are told that families should be “democratic,” not “authoritarian,” and that parents have no right to impose their rules on children. But note what the Bible says:

Proverbs 1:8 - A son should not forsake his mother's **law**. Good rules actually benefit children. They give the child a sense of security and allow them to benefit from the wisdom of the parents. They do not need to worry, because they know their parents will not let them do anything seriously bad for them (Proverbs 29:15; 4:10-12).

Luke 2:51 - Jesus set an example of subjection to His parents.

Romans 1:30,32 - Disobedience to parents is a sin for which one who is guilty is worthy of death (Deuteronomy 21:18-21).

Proverbs 22:6 - Training of children is intended to mold their character for later life, so when they are older they will live by right principles. But children often will not do what is right simply by choice. Parents must tell the children what is right and then insist that they practice it.

Ephesians 6:1; Colossians 3:20 - Children are commanded to obey their parents. If children learn to properly submit to parents, they will benefit all their lives as they relate to other authorities. They must learn to submit to bosses at work, civil rulers, elders in the church, and above all to God. If children are not taught to obey their parents, they will have trouble with authority all their lives. If they learn at a young age to obey parents, they will understand all their lives how to submit to authority and how to use it for their good.

#### D. Parents Must Motivate Children by Rewards and Punishments.

Some people argue that children can be raised just by instructing them and showing them affection. But even with all their instruction and affection in the world, children often simply will not want to do what their parents say. What can parents do then to motivate obedience? Some reject punishment and especially spanking, but what does the Bible say?

### **The value of punishment.**

Hebrews 12:7-11 - A father's chastening of his children is compared to the chastisement God gives His people. Chastisement is an act of love, not hatred, because it is done for the good of the child to train them to be a good person. It results in the child respecting the father. To deny the value of proper punishment of children is to deny the wisdom of God, who chastises His own children!

Proverbs 13:24 - To fail to spank children when needed, is to hate them. Many people get upset at that statement, but this is what the Bible says! If we love children, we will chasten them when needed. Properly done, spanking is an act of love; and God says that those who deny the value of spanking are the ones who hate children (Proverbs 22:15; 19:18).

I knew a mother one time who did not believe in spanking her children. Every curse word the child said and every evil way they acted and hit their little brothers, she just held them and loved them. The mother said, "Jesus never hit anyone in His entire life." The mother obviously did not know the Bible and as a result of her actions hated her children. Correction is not hate, it is love. Nowhere is it stated in the Bible that Jesus married and had children to correct. The children grew up and hated their parents and were lawbreakers. The mother who refused to spank her children pierced her soul with many sorrows.

Spanking and other forms of punishment should be used, as already described, for the good of the child, not for the selfish desires of the parent. But punishment is a good and valid means of molding a child's character, so they grow up knowing that they must be subject to authority and that disobedience has consequences. Spanking, like fire, can be misused, but when used properly it can be a tremendous power for good.

### **The value of rewards.**

Luke 15:20-24 - Another valid form of motivating our children is **reward**. God is not just a punisher of those who do evil, He is also a rewarder of those who do good (Hebrews 11:6). So, parents should avoid just criticizing and punishing children. They must also diligently praise and appreciate their children when they do good. Valid rewards, encourage obedience.

Rewards and punishments may take many forms, and all of them are capable of misuse. We must use good judgment and common sense in applying Bible principles. And even when parents do their best, they will often feel inadequate and will find raising children to be a definite challenge.

But there is simply no need for so many parents to have so many problems with their children. Proper application of God's Word would solve many of these problems. Understanding these principles is an important part of preparing for or improving marriage.

Young people, when you decide whom you will marry, don't just consider whether you will be happy and get along well with a person. Consider how good a mother or father this person will be to your children. Do they show appreciation for children and understand Bible principles for raising them? Did their parents have a good relationship with their children? If not, what evidence do you have that this person will do a better job with your children? Does he/she demonstrate an example of the kind of godly Christian that you want your children to grow up to be?

You owe it to yourself, to your children, and to God to marry a companion that will help you raise your children to be godly, dedicated Christians. The eternal destiny of your children hangs in the balance. And God will judge you and your spouse for the work you have done in raising your children.

=====

How important is sexual purity? Why should a couple wait till marriage to express sexual affection? What does the Bible say about premarital and extramarital relations? What should a couple do to remain pure?

## **X. Sexual Purity**

A man named Larry teaches junior high school in a rural district of a conservative state. Students in class brought up the story of an eighth-grade boy, who had been expelled for bad behavior, then fathered a child out of wedlock. The majority of the students believed he would be a good father. Larry said the boy should have waited till he was married. The class responded that everyone has sexual relations before marriage; no one waits! They expressed disbelief when Larry said he had waited and had never been divorced. When the teacher said couples should work hard to have a good marriage, the class could not understand why!

When young people have been taught they evolved from animals, why should they reserve the sexual union for marriage or view marriage as a lifetime commitment? Animals see no need for such things.

When even homosexuals can marry, marriage must not mean much. *World* reported a study at the Hoover Institute: "Scandinavian gay marriage has driven home the message that marriage itself is outdated and that virtually any family form, including out-of-wedlock parenthood, is acceptable.....in Sweden, the few young couples who do get married often do not like to admit it, since what they have done is so far out of the norm that they feel embarrassed."

The public media virtually refuses to even acknowledge marriage. It is politely incorrect to even mention words like "husband," "wife," or even "spouse." Instead, the media continually refers to your "partner," "companion," or "significant other." And "family" has been redefined to describe any group of people who live together and care for one

another in some way.

No wonder young people do not respect the importance of marriage or of reserving the sexual union for marriage.

### A. Reasons For Reserving The Sexual Union For Marriage.

#### **Marriage was created by God and is “very good.”**

Genesis 2:18-24 - At creation, God observed that it was not “good” for man to be alone, so he created woman and ordained marriage. Within marriage, a **man** cleaves to his **wife** and they become one flesh (which includes the sexual union - I Corinthians 6:16).

God did not create another man as a mate for man. He created a woman as a companion for man. So, marriage and the sexual union within marriage were ordained by God. God declared this to be “good.” It meets a fundamental need. In fact, everything God made at creation was “very good” (Genesis 1:31).

Those who believe in God, and specifically in God as Creator, must believe that marriage is “good” and so is the relationship ordained of God for the sexual union.

#### **God’s Word forbids sexual relationships outside of marriage.**

Hebrews 13:4 - Marriage is honorable and the sexual relationship (the “bed”) is undefiled only within marriage. Note that the sexual union is not inherently evil. But the passage defines “fornication” and “adultery” to be sexual union “the bed) outside marriage. God will judge such conduct.

Exodus 20:14 - The Old Testament commanded to not commit adultery.

Mark 7:20-23 - Jesus taught that fornication comes from the heart and defiles a man.

I Corinthians 6:9-11 - The Corinthians had been fornicators, adulterers, homosexuals, etc. Those who practice this cannot inherit the kingdom of God.

I Corinthians 6:16-18 - Fornication is wrong because it constitutes being “one flesh” with someone other than one’s lawful spouse. This refers back to God’s plan, which places the sexual union in marriage (Genesis 2:24).

Revelation 21:8; 22:14,15 - Fornicators are among those who will not enter heaven but will be in the lake of fire.

I Corinthians 7:2-4 - To avoid **fornication**, one should satisfy the sexual desire only with “his own wife” or “husband.” God expressly confirms that marriage companions must be of the opposite gender and that each may satisfy sexual desires only with his/her marital companion.

So, marriage is the authorized relationship for satisfying the need for lifetime companionship and for sexual affection. But it involves one man with one woman with a lifetime commitment. Only that relationship is honorable by God’s decree.

God says sexual relations before or outside marriage are wrong, no matter how much we care for the other person. These passages should settle the issue. But sometimes God gives additional reasons for His decrees. Consider additional reasons He gives for saving ourselves for our marriage companion. (Ephesians 5:3-5; Galatians 5:19-21; Colossians 3:5-10; I Timothy 1:9-11; Proverbs 5:1-23; I Thessalonians 4:3-8; I Corinthians 5:9-10; Ezekiel 16:32).

**Sexual acts outside marriage lead to jealousy, alienation, violence, and disease.**

Proverbs 5:1-18 - Relations with an immoral woman lead to bitterness (v4), dishonor (v9), poverty (v10), grief (v11), destruction of flesh and body (v11 - as in sexually transmitted diseases), and even death (v5). All of us have heard of people who have

experienced some or all of these as a result of sexual promiscuity.

People think venereal diseases can be avoided by “safe sex” or cured by modern medicine. If so, why are many such diseases at all-time highs? And why do we continually hear about the dangers of AIDS? Despite politically correct views, the fact is that AIDS is essentially a sexual transmitted disease. Those who avoid illicit sex and illegal drugs have little need for concern.

The solution: stay away from those who are sexually promiscuous (v8), and rejoice with the wife of your youth (VV15-18).

Proverbs 6:32-35 - Adultery leads to wounds, dishonor, and reproach. It causes jealousy, fury, and vengeance, which cannot be appeased. This occurs when people violate marriage vows, but it also occurs among people in trial marriages and homosexual relationships (7:21-27).

Such conduct often brings a burden of guilt to a relationship, which manifests itself in many ways. We may be angry for no apparent reason or unable to express affection freely. When we know our spouse has done this outside marriage (even if they did it with us), we may wonder if he/she will do it again, or with how many others they have done it.

Matthew 19:9 - Sexual union outside marriage is so serious that it is the only grounds for which God will permit the one who is pure to divorce and remarry.

Those who practice chastity before marriage and sexual faithfulness in marriage, need not be concerned about problems of promiscuity. These are reasons why God has restricted the sexual union to marriage. Obeying His plan is always best.

**Marital commitment provides a stable relationship for raising children.**

Genesis 1:26-28; 2:24 - God created male and female, told them to have children (reproduce), and said man should be “one flesh” with his wife. One reason God restricted the sexual union to marriage is that this gives children **a family with both a father and a mother to raise them.**

Proverbs 1:8 - Children should hear the instruction of their father and forsake not the law of their mother.

The fundamental concept throughout Scripture is that children should be raised in a family consisting of a father and mother who train and provide for them (Ephesians 6:2-4; Luke 2:48-51; Genesis 4:1,25; etc.). Marriage, with a lifetime commitment of husband and wife, provides the stable, loving relationship that children need.

Sometimes circumstances beyond our control take away father or mother, but these should be viewed as tragedies. **Any relationship, which runs the risk of conceiving a child without the benefit of both a father and a mother to raise it, is irresponsible, unloving, and immoral.**

Since the sexual union is the means God designed to conceive children, it follows that having this union outside of marriage can and often does result in children born out of wedlock. Such conduct is irresponsible, unloving, and immoral. Yet, a significant portion of children today are born out of wedlock. Hollywood glorifies this action and calls the offspring “love children.” No child should ever have to fear that their parents would choose to risk their being born or raised in such an immoral, irresponsible circumstance.

**Marital commitment provides the needs of old age.**

**Because marriage is a lifetime commitment, it provides a permanent relationship of companionship and love, even into old age.**

Romans 7:2,3 - Husband and wife are bound to one another as long as they live. Those who are true to their marriage vows, will have a spouse to live with, until death parts them. Few things in life are more beautiful than a couple that continues to love and care for one another into their older years.

Young people, who choose promiscuous or homosexual relationships, have no such companionship. They may pass from partner to partner, living for the moment, with no thought

of the consequences for old age. Likewise, people who divorce without Scriptural cause, have no right to a companion in their older years. People, who are not true to their marriage commitment, have no reason to expect others to be committed to them.

**Likewise, parents who raise children in a committed family, will have children to care for them in their older years.**

Ephesians 6:2,3, - Honoring parents includes caring for them in their old age.

I Timothy 5:4,8,16 - When parents become elderly, especially when they are widowed and their marriage companion is gone, their children should see that their needs are met (Matthew 15:4-6; Ruth 4:13-15; John 19:25-27).

This is called “repaying” the parents. But if parents bring children into the world without a committed family relationship with both a father and a mother to love and care for them, what reason do children have to be committed to them in their old age? If such children learn to care for their parents, it won't be because the parents set a good example of caring for them.

**The true beauty of the sexual affection is experienced only in true marriage.**

I Corinthians 7:2-5 - To avoid fornication, man and woman should marry and then

should give one another the **affection** that is **due**. You do not have authority over your own body to enjoy this affection, except with your committed marriage spouse.

In a committed marriage, the sexual union becomes the ultimate expression of affection, love, and companionship. By reserving this relationship only for our lawful spouse, we are telling them, “I love you so much that I have chosen you to be the only person in the world in which I will engage in this most intimate expression of love.” This makes sexual affection the incredibly special bond of love that God intended it to be.

Surveys have repeatedly shown that couples who remain true to their marriage commitment express much greater satisfaction with sexual affection.

Like everything else God created for good, when people pervert it, they cannot fully enjoy its benefits. People, who practice casual, recreational sexual activities, will never, ever enjoy the true beauty of sexual affection, and most will never even understand what they missed. The brief, passing pleasure such people enjoy can never measure up to committed marital bliss.

### B. Applications of Sexual Purity.

Obviously, there are limits to what can properly be discussed in a public forum. Bible teachers have a problem because, if they give detailed discussion, some object that they are too explicit. But if we are not specific enough, many young people will get into trouble because no one warned them what guidelines and limits they should respect. We need to be as explicit as the Bible and specific enough to properly apply Bible teaching.

#### **Avoid tempting circumstances and conduct before and after marriage.**

Proverbs 5:8; 6:26-29 - The point of Solomon’s warnings was to stay away from people

and circumstances that would seduce you to violate sexual purity. Don't make close friendships with people who are promiscuous.

Proverbs 6:23-25; Matthew 5:27,28 - The way to avoid immoral conduct is by keeping your thoughts pure. Avoid the lustful thoughts that lead to immoral conduct.

Titus 2:5 - Young women should be taught to be "chaste" - virtuous, modest, not indecent. This applies to clothing, words, and conduct (II Corinthians 11:2; Philippians 4:8; Luke 8:27,35; I Timothy 2:9,20; II Samuel 11:2-4).

Young men and women need to be taught that there are ways of speaking, dressing, and acting that arouse sexual desire. These are good and proper in marriage, because married couples can properly act on those desires. But when you have no right to fulfill the desire, then you have no right to arouse it in yourself or in one whom you are dating.

Young people when dating should keep their hands off of areas of the body that should be reserved for marriage. They should make sure they keep their clothing on and cover only what married people have the right to see. Don't date anyone who doesn't understand these principles or that has a reputation for improper conduct. At the first sign of improper conduct, stop and insist on respect for purity. If you need more specific guidance, get advice from your parents or from respected older Christians (Titus 2:4-5).

Likewise, married people should avoid the dangers of forming too close relationships with people of the opposite gender other than your spouse. Avoid the very appearance of a "dating" situation. Avoid being alone in private with another person other than your spouse. At the first sign of improper conduct, immediately distance yourself from the friendship.

And don't think nothing wrong can happen, because you both are Christians. Even faithful Christians have been brought to sin by forming too close friendships with people of the opposite gender. Often the relationship begins because we have a special

relationship with other Christians, we think we are safe so we drop our barriers, and soon we have an illicit relationship.

“**Flee** fornication.”

(Proverbs 4:23; 6:27; 13:20; Matthew 5:8, 6:13; 18:8-9; Romans 13:14, I Corinthians 15:33; Genesis 39:7-12).

### **Spouses should express sexual affection in marriage.**

I Corinthians 7:2-5 - With your true marital spouse you not only may be intimate, but you should do so freely. You and your spouse have no one else with whom to fulfill this desire. Be free and expressive of your affection.

V5 - Failure to do this allows Satan to tempt us to a lack of self-control. This can happen when one withholds affection in anger or in an attempt to punish the other. Or it could happen because of prolonged physical separation. Avoid either form of temptation. Married couples

should be available to each other in the marriage bed.

Vv3,4 - Both the husband and the wife are to show affection; neither is to deprive the other (v5). This is not just for the husband's pleasure. Both will truly be blessed provided both truly seek to show affection.

Remember that sexual affection is an expression of love. As we discussed previously, love requires **giving to please the other person**. Love is destroyed by selfishness. Nowhere is that true more than in sexual affection. Your relationship will be blessed to the extent that you set aside what you want and try to please your companion. Husbands especially, both spouses, need to be patient, gentle, and giving. **The most basic thing to remember about sexual affection in marriage is that it is an**

**expression of love and should always be guided by a genuine desire to please the other person.**

One writer referred to proper sexual affection in marriage as “the twenty-year warm up.” At first, you are not sure how to please one another. It may even help if, shortly before or soon after marriage, you personally read a wholesome, helpful book. But as you truly seek to please one another, you will grow in understanding throughout your marriage.

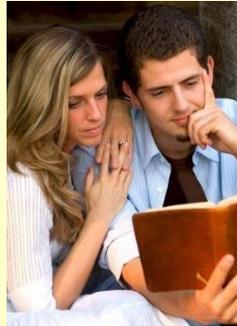
And that’s another reason why people will never fully enjoy the blessings of sexual affection, if they don’t appreciate marriage. A married couple, who truly love one another, will grow in affection over long periods of time. People who lack marital commitment are generally selfish in their approach and won’t take time to grow. Their acts are expressions of lust and selfish desires, rather than true love and commitment.

### **Conclusion**

As society declines, those who have left God’s Word will grow worse and worse in their perversions of marriage and the sexual relationship. But those who seek to truly be blessed in this life and in eternity need to learn to appreciate and obey God’s plan for marriage.

God has created many incredibly powerful forces. When those forces are used improperly, they can do incredible harm; when used properly, they can be incredible blessings. So, nothing makes people more miserable than the breakdown or perversion of marriage. But nothing brings a greater blessing in this life than a loving marriage that follows God’s design.





## *Important Tips for Those Who Marry*

**KEEP GOD FIRST!**

**PRAY TOGETHER!**

**RESPECT & HONOR  
EACH OTHER!**

**ENCOURAGE EACH  
OTHER TO GROW  
TOGETHER!**

**READ THE BIBLE  
TOGETHER AS  
MUCH AS POSSIBLE!**

**BE SWIFT TO HEAR  
& SLOW TO SPEAK!**

**TAKE TIME TO  
COMMUNICATE  
WITH EACH OTHER!**



**UNDERSTAND THAT  
LOVE IS A CHOICE,  
NOT MERELY A  
FEELING**

**HAVE A "MISSION  
STATEMENT" FOR  
YOUR MARRIAGE  
& FAMILY!**

**DO NOT LET OTHERS  
COME BETWEEN  
YOU & YOUR  
SPOUSE!**

**PROTECT & HONOR  
YOUR MARRIAGE  
VOWS!**

