

*What God hath joined together,
let not man put asunder*

**Making the Most
Of Your
Marriage**

Pastor Hollis Partlowe

A decorative arrangement featuring a cream-colored Bible with gold lettering and a tufted cover, surrounded by pink roses and white baby's breath flowers on a lace doily.



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***"What therefore God has joined together,
let no man separate."***

(Matthew 19:6, NASB)

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this booklet is to help fill the need this pastor sees for premarital counseling. It is hoped that it will be of help to other pastors. The writer has used some of the material for some time now in premarital counseling. He also hopes that this booklet will be used as a text for Sunday school classes, home Bible studies, and midweek services.

It should be understood that the focus here is not on perversions or abnormalities. Persons with these problems should have special attention on an individual, couple, or perhaps small-group basis. "Preventive medicine" is my number-one concern. If you are contemplating marriage, I hope these concepts will help you chart the right course. If you are already married, I hope to help you and your spouse to enrich your relationship.

It is certainly not my purpose to condemn anyone or sit in judgment on anyone, regardless of what his marital status is or may become. Therefore, the ideas of this booklet are offered for your consideration—you are free to decide if they seem logical and reasonable to you, and if, above all, they are biblical. This booklet is offered with the hope and prayer that at least in some way it will enrich your marriage.

Remember above all else that God loves you and stands ready to forgive you regardless of your mistakes. He can change a miserable marriage into a happy one.

The Bible indicates social upheaval will be a sign of the last days of this age. "You must face the fact: the final age of this world is to be a time of troubles. Men will love nothing but money and self; they will be arrogant, boastful, and abusive; with no respect for parents, no gratitude, no piety, no natural affection; they will be implacable in their hatreds, scandal-mongers, intemperate and fierce, strangers to all goodness, traitors, adventurers, swollen with self-importance. They will be men who put pleasure in place of God, men who preserve the outward form of religion, but are a standing denial of its reality. Keep clear of men like these" (2 Tim. 3:1-5, NEB).

My prayer is that each reader may escape that trend and build a marriage based on Ephesians 5:22-33.

Pastor Hollis Partlowe.

SOME SECRETS OF HAPPY MARRIAGE

Good family relations are not an accident. They are the result of planning and dedication. If you are married or contemplate marriage, keep reading: our approach is practical rather than theological in this chapter.

I'd like to share with you some secrets of happy marriage. The first two should be considered before marriage.

1. *Marry When You Are Mature*

Only when one wants to quit running around, make a nest, and settle down is he ready for marriage. It is unwise for a couple to marry until they both have arrived at this stage in their growth.

I do not equate age with maturity. What is maturity anyway? Clyde Narramore, a Christian psychologist, said: "Maturity is maintaining the right balance." Ann Landers said: "Maturity is patience, the willingness to pass up immediate pleasure in favor of a long-term gain." Tim LaHaye, a pastor and marriage counselor, said: "Maturity is the opposite of selfishness." The writer concurs with these three definitions. Moreover, as one matures through the years, his value system changes. Things very important to one at eighteen are not nearly as important at fifty-five.

Someone said: "Love conquers all." Married couples certainly need it, for they have a lot to conquer. Furthermore, love is best illustrated by kindness, as the New Testament clearly teaches: "Love is patient; love is kind and envies no one. Love is never boastful, nor conceited, nor rude; never selfish, not quick to take offence. Love keeps no score of wrongs; does not gloat over other men's sins, but delights in the truth. There is nothing love cannot face; there is no limit to its faith, its hope, and its endurance" (1 Cor. 13:4-8, NEB).

Love is an attitude of giving rather than getting; of accepting and forgiving rather than finding fault. Sometimes two immature persons get married expecting the other to give in for a lifetime, but that doesn't happen. Statistics point toward a more stable marriage after a long courtship.

2. *Marry a Friend*

You may ask: "Who would think of marrying anyone but a friend?" Well, believe it or not, total strangers get married all the time. Scripture asks the searching question: "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" (Amos 3:2.) The obvious answer is NO! If two persons are going to walk together, they must be agreed, and it's equally true in marriage. Moreover, the agreeing should come before the walking starts or they will probably go off in different directions.

Marriage is a partnership in which two persons must view the road ahead from the same basic point of view. Having greater experience for good judgment, parents should be able to advise their children about marriage, but often this is not the case. However, if the parents have built their home on Jesus Christ and built up a good relationship with the children, this will come about naturally.

A couple should agree on such things as religion, education, hobbies—things which determine how time will be spent. To agree on likes and dislikes is a good

definition of friendship. It takes time to get to know a person. No one can prove to be your friend in a short time, which is one reason hasty marriages fail. When the honeymoon is over the relationship collapses. Marriage partners need to be friends as well as lovers.

3. Declare Your Family's Independence

Don't live with your parents. No house is that big—no kitchen is big enough for two women. The leave-and-cleave rule was given by the Lord God at the dawn of human history. "Therefore shall a man *leave* his father and his mother, and shall *cleave* unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh" (Gen. 2:24). This principle is repeated twice in the New Testament, Matthew 19:5 and Ephesians 5:31. If two people want to cleave but not leave, they are asking for trouble. From a practical standpoint, as well as a theological one, the Bible is the best manual on marriage.

When two persons marry they are setting up a new home. It need not be completely cut off from the larger family, but the new home should be independent of it. It should also be self-supporting and self-governing. The new couple should make their own decisions about family affairs, since God has entrusted them with this responsibility. Unhappiness will result when this rule is ignored.

4. Make Your House a House of Prayer

This is the important point in this chapter. "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God" (Phil. 4:6, NASB). Do you want a good marriage? Make your request known to God! It's just about impossible to pray together and stay angry. A family that has consistent prayer and family worship will not be spared a bit of rough going, but they will be better able to navigate the rapids they face. They get strength, courage, and wisdom from above. It's free for the asking. Yes, the couple should be agreed in religion. Happy marriage cannot be based merely on natural attraction.

Jesus Christ wants to be in every marriage. Without him, families become ingrown and selfish, and ingrown families are no more pleasant than ingrown toenails. The place of the church is vital to Christian marriage. Church life provides strength and fellowship and helps keep the family from becoming too self-centered. Sunday school, worship, evangelistic efforts, etc., all contribute to the stability and well-being of the family.

5. Plan for Your Children

Children are a part of most marriages. "Lo, children are an heritage of the LORD: and the fruit of the womb is his reward" (Psa. 127:3). Children are God-given, and a part of the blueprint for happiness in marriage in nearly all cases. However, couples need time to get adjusted to each other before the first child appears. Consequently, this pastor is of the opinion that generally a couple should not have the first child until after they are married two to three years. Each couple needs to learn the art of living together as man and wife. They run the risk of needless friction otherwise.

Responsibility in marriage is tremendous, both for the husband-wife relationship and for the children. Someone said: "Young-uns are like puppies. A pup that knows a lot of tricks ain't smarter than other pups; it just had somebody spend time on it." In planning for your children, be sure to include spending lots of time with them.

6. *Keep Income and Outgo Close Together*

A budget is essential. Financial strains cause problems in many homes. Bad management drives many marriages on the rocks. Here is how to avoid this kind of trouble:

a. Find out how much income you are going to have before you start spending any of it.

b. Keep track of what you spend. (If necessary write down every penny spent. That's easier than fighting about money "all the time.")

c. Dedicate yourself to spend only what is available at any given time.

This is a simple formula but difficult to carry out on a consistent basis. Most advertising today appeals to us to buy things we don't really need. Everywhere we go we are bombarded to buy this product or that gadget. Someone observed: "Some spend money they don't have to buy things they don't need to impress people they don't even like." It's the "keeping up with the Joneses" idea! Before you try to keep up with the Joneses, find out where they are going. Maybe they are not going to the same place you are. Right use of money will contribute to a stable marriage.

7. *Stand Second in Line*

Strangely enough, happiness can more easily find us when we are standing second in line.

During the Civil War, President Lincoln and a member of his cabinet went to call on General McClellan. Official etiquette, that the President shall not call upon a private citizen, was put aside. Times were too tense. Lincoln needed firsthand information, and McClellan was the only man who could give it to him.

The General was not at home, and when he did come home, he went to bed without seeing them although they waited for him for an hour and a half.

When the two men were outside the house, the cabinet member exploded in anger. He insisted that Lincoln fire him! But the President placed his hand on the other man's shoulder. "Don't take it so hard," he said. "I'll hold McClellan's horse, if he will only bring us victories." Isn't that beautiful?

Why was Lincoln willing to accept this insult to his dignity? His goal was to win a war and free a race! That was his passion. His pride, his position, his dignity, his rights took second place. That's how the formula works—in public and in the home. The happiness of our mate comes first. Our own rights, our dignity, respect due us—these come second. The secret of happy marriage is made up of little things, little unselfish acts, little words, little courtesies, little attentions. You need not leave tact and human kindness on the office desk. Christianity at home includes appreciation, kindness, and simple courtesy. Bluntness, painfulness, that brand of honesty that always says what it thinks no matter how unkind—these are not virtues but faults. They do not belong in the home nor in any relationship.

Furthermore, to parade your partner's weaknesses before others is the height of disloyalty. Instead, be supportive of your mate. Perhaps the faults of your spouse constitute about ten percent of the whole person, but you probably focus on that instead of the ninety percent that is wholesome. This approach is destructive, not constructive.

Marriage does not fail. People fail! The problem is with the personnel, not marriage which was instituted of God.

"Rivalry and personal vanity should have no place among you, but you should

humbly reckon others better than yourselves. You must look to each other's interest and not merely to your own" (Phil. 2:3, 4). Although this passage doesn't speak specifically of marriage, it is a good formula for any couple. If you go into marriage to *get* happiness you'll most likely fail; if you go into marriage to *give* happiness, you'll probably find it. Always give what is meaningful to your partner. Selfishness will come back to hurt you.

A woman unhappy in marriage is usually starved for appreciation. Most likely her husband is too. Make your mate happy. Make that your goal. If you want your own life to run smoothly, you've got to take some of the pressure off your partner. Marriage is a two-wheeled cart. If one wheel is bent out of shape, the whole thing isn't likely to go.

8. *Never Lose Your Sense of Humor*

A sense of humor is a good shock absorber for the bumps of life. An older man, speaking to a new father, said: "Raising kids is no fun, I'll tell you." He had lost his sense of humor and contact with his children. No wonder they had grown away from him. The parents who laugh, pray, and work together with their children will find the rewards are great. "A merry heart doeth good like a medicine" (Prov. 17:22a). Have special fun days with the family.

9. *Keep Going Forward Together*

Make sure you both are on the same team. Talk to each other; define your goals; steer your course together. You are partners in the same boat. If it sinks, you both go down! You both are on the same train going down the track. If it wrecks, you are both wrecked!

Marriage is not a relationship in which each seeks to dominate the other. Someone said: "God made earth and man in six days, then rested. He then made woman and neither God nor man has had any rest since."

Ruth Peal, writing in *Reader's Digest*, November, 1972, in her article "Three Ways to Mothproof Your Marriage," said in part that in the last analysis, marriage is just a relationship in which human beings try to find release and fulfillment. They don't ask so very much:

1. To come first with someone. (Every person needs to feel that he marches at the head of some other person's parade.)
2. To be helped by someone. (Everybody needs somebody else's strength.)
3. To be needed by someone.

(Paraphrased)

Making the Most of Your Marriage

Part One: Defining Marriage

Christian marriage is an unconditional covenant. It is a total commitment of two persons to each other and total commitment of both to God. The Bible, moreover, is our guidebook in all areas of life. It speaks with great clarity about marriage and the home.

This is a day, however, when many are trying to write a charter of their own. Situation ethics is the classic example. "As long as it's done in love, and doesn't hurt anybody, it's all right. Everything is relative." In the opinion of this pastor, that is the road to ruin.

1. *The Permanency of Marriage*

Beyond doubt, God looks at marriage as a permanent relationship. During his earthly ministry, the Pharisees came to interview Jesus and tried to trap him in his teaching. "Do you permit divorce?" they asked. "Don't you read the Scriptures?" he replied. In them it is written that at the beginning God created man and woman, and that a man should leave his father and mother, and be forever united to his wife. The two shall become one—no longer two, but one! And no man may divorce what God has joined together. Then, why, they asked, did Moses say a man may divorce his wife by merely writing her a letter of dismissal? Jesus replied, Moses did that in recognition of your hard and evil hearts, but it was not what God had originally intended. And I tell you this, that anyone who divorces his wife, except for fornication, and marries another, commits adultery" (Matt. 19:3b-9, LB).

Although polygamy (plurality of wives) was practiced all through Bible times, Jesus declared that monogamy (one wife) was God's original plan. Yes, Jesus showed these Pharisees how man had corrupted the divine institution of marriage. Jesus' standards seemed so high the disciples exclaimed: "If that is how it is, it is better not to marry" (v. 10). Their reaction is a clear indication that they got his point. "No man may divorce what God has joined together."

Someone asked: "At what time in history did God decide that man should have only one wife?" Actually the answer is quite simple: At the very beginning, when he decided man should have a wife. The Lord saw that it was not good for man to be alone—mentally, emotionally, spiritually, or physically. Consequently, God made Adam a wife (Gen. 2:18). Observe that God made him only one wife. As facetious as it may sound, Adam had more than one rib. If God wanted him to have more than one wife, he could have taken another rib.

A woman told her pastor that she wanted to get married. The pastor said, "It's one man for one woman—that's God's plan, and you just can't improve on that." The woman replied: "I don't want to improve on it, I just want to get in on it."

The home is the cornerstone of our society. If it crumbles, the country crumbles. It is interesting to notice that before God gave us the church or the school, he gave us the home. The family unit was God's idea at the dawn of human history. He

expects the home to be built upon his Word. Now I realize that if all the family members don't obey God and put him first, it's hard for the others to do so. Living the Christian life in a divided home can be difficult, terribly difficult sometimes, but it's not impossible.

Marriage, remember, is for keeps. Matthew 19:6 is still in the Bible, no matter how modern or new a translation you may get. It reads: "What God has joined together, let not man put asunder." Marriage is serious business. God's laws for marriage are perfect, as all his laws are. The wedding ceremony is a rite in which God himself is active, and everything done should be judged by this central fact. Even the state recognizes the divine origin of marriage by giving authority to the church to solemnize the exchange of vows. Marriage involves a legal contract that can be dissolved in the courts, but it also involves a divine contract based on the promise, "as long as we both shall live."

God's Word further says: "You were united to your wife by the Lord. In God's wise plan, when you married, the two of you became one person in his sight. And what does he want? Godly children from your union. Therefore guard your passions! Keep faith with the wife of your youth. For the Lord, the God of Israel, says he hates divorce and cruel men. Therefore control your passions—let there be no divorcing of your wives" (Mal. 2:15, 16, LB). I realize that a passage like this seems completely out of step with our society, but it is part of God's message to us. One may be looked upon as an old fogie to call attention to a passage like this, yet the brutal facts of life along Heartbreak Avenue and Tear-Stained Street clearly indicate the need for such admonition.

For a person to face divorce is a vital test of his submission to the authority of Jesus Christ. Here is a point where the question of the Lordship of Christ moves out of the realm of the abstract into the bloodstream of daily life. Jesus spoke directly to the issue of divorce and remarriage (Matt. 19:1-9; 5:32). So make sure that you marry the right person because of the permanency of the union. "The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth; but if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord" (1 Cor. 7:39). Make no mistake! Marriage is a lifetime arrangement. When the disciples were confronted with this concept as God's design for marriage from the beginning, they said: "It's better to stay single" (Matt. 19:10). Jesus said that was correct—but not everyone can handle being single. Consequently, God designed marriage for sexual expression where partners can feel fulfilled and satisfied while feeling free from guilt and shame at the same time. Therefore, God has designed marriage for most people. The Bible exalts marriage. "Let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband" (1 Cor. 7:2). To forbid marriage, moreover, is contrary to Scripture (1 Tim. 4:1-3; Heb. 13:4).

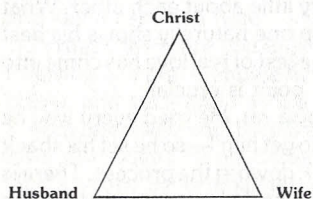
2. Make the Most of Yourself

A happy marriage results when each lives for the other and both for the Lord. To make the most of your marriage, you must make the most of yourself. Be the best you, the best person you are capable of being. Of course, marriage isn't held together by one person. Two made it; it also takes two to maintain it. Marriage is like an empty box. Neither partner can take out what has not been put in it. About one in three or one in two and one half marriages ends in divorce. Evidently many would rather "switch than fight." California is the nation's largest marital mortuary. This state now requires premarital counseling to get a license. It will not be known

how effective it is for ten years, because most divorces come within the first ten years. Be that as it may, this pastor is convinced of the importance of premarital counseling. Most pastors need to do more of it. It makes no sense that in most important areas of life one must be properly trained, but in *the* most important, many enter with no training at all—completely ignorant of how to live with one of the opposite sex in a marriage relationship. Ministers, I feel, have a huge responsibility to counsel couples about the seriousness of marriage. Perhaps we spend too much time and effort getting ready for the wedding and too little for the marriage. Today it's harder to get a driver's license than a marriage license.

Marriage is a triangle. What do I mean by that? Christ is the top and at the base are husband and wife. Moreover, the farther they go up the lines to get closer to Christ, the closer they get to each other. Marriage, when entered into with this concept in mind, has a bright future. Most couples I've married are like little children—they want to be happy every moment. They don't seem to realize that marriage can also make one very unhappy. A perfect marriage is not so much *finding* the right person as *being* the right person.

Make the most of yourself to make the most of your marriage. You'll be glad you did!



3. *The Reference Point for All of Us*

The marriage in which we grew up is the reference point for all of us. We tend to behave in marriage like the parent of the same sex. When a young woman gets married, she will probably behave in her marriage like her mother did. Likewise, when a young man marries, he will tend to behave like his father. After all, that's about all that either of them knows about the marriage relationship. If you can imagine the mother of the bride and the father of the groom married, you can predict to some degree what the new marriage will be like. Furthermore, psychologists say girls tend to marry men like their fathers. I suppose that's why the mother of the bride cries at the wedding. Someone said: "The young man who wants to marry happily should pick out a good mother and marry one of her daughters—any one will do."

Certainly parents need to give their children good examples of married partners. For example, they need to show affection in front of the children. I don't mean they have to be always huggy-kissy, and I don't mean bedroom stuff either. I do mean light physical touch and expressions of affection. It's the way children learn. If they don't see good demonstrations at home, they will probably have difficulty relating to a marriage partner later. Love is the ability to give and receive affection.

A little boy asked his mother how wars got started. She said: "World War I was started by the Germans." The father said: "No, that's not right!" Mother said, "Who asked you to get involved? The boy asked me." After watching them argue for a few minutes the boy said: "It's all right, Mother; I think I know how wars got started." (Cp. Jas. 4:1.)

Little irritations can cause big troubles. In fact, often the little things make us want to climb the wall or pull out our hair. Even a right position can be made distasteful and boring by nagging. I'd rather be swallowed by a whale than nibbled to death by minnows. "Marriage may be made in heaven, but man is responsible for

the maintenance." With God's help a miserable marriage can be changed into a good marriage.

Then, too, couples need to learn to share things they love rather than quarrel about things they dislike. "Love does not demand its own way" (1 Cor. 13:5). Someone said, "Love is behavior that seeks the other's best interest." Happy marriage is based not so much on perfection of the partners, but on acceptance of each other's faults. Love is total acceptance!

A study by a sociologist revealed that unhappily married women tend to exaggerate and dwell upon their husbands' faults. In contrast, happily married women, though they recognized their husbands' faults, tended to overlook them and excuse them. "Love suffereth long and is kind" (1 Cor. 13:4).

Usually when two persons marry, they know very little about each other. What they do know is usually good, because in courtship one naturally shows his best side. Later, faults of both surface, sparks fly, and the test of real love has come into the marriage. How the situation is handled at this point is crucial.

The story is told of a miner who was bothered by a rat. He tried every way he knew to get rid of it. One day he said: "I know how to get him"—so he set his shack on fire. Well he got rid of him, but he burnt his shack down in the process. There is something wrong with a man who would burn his house down to get rid of a rat. It appears that some men and women behave about like that in marriage.

4. *Friends As Well As Lovers*

One of the basic elements of marriage is friendship. Too often, couples are lovers but not friends. Friendship means consideration for the other person's feelings and point of view. It means trying to please, putting the spouse's wishes first. The woman who does will most likely find a more responsible, generous, easier-to-get-along-with guy who will also put her wishes first. Moreover, if a marriage doesn't have the basic element of friendship, the couple hasn't learned to appreciate each other. In a good marriage, after the physical declines a bit, friendship supports it. This ingredient should always be present. If you have biology only, and it dies, little is left. Divorce will probably be the result.

Furthermore, a good marriage is not a gift; it's an achievement. One gets out of marriage no more than he puts into it. The two must work together to build a meaningful relationship. Scripture says: "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity" (Psa. 133:1). This pastor's translation: "How good and pleasant it is for husband and wife to dwell together in unity." Surely husbands and wives are included in "brethren."

5. *Behavior and Feelings*

The relationship between behavior and feelings will prove helpful in marriage. You act yourself into a new way of feeling. You don't feel yourself into a new way of behavior. You never wait until you feel a certain way before doing something. Obey what is right; then feelings change. Many never seem to relate obedience to their feelings. In fact, it appears to this writer that the forgotten word in Christianity today is obedience. Much of Christianity is feeling- and experience-oriented, which, to say the least, is letting the tail wag the dog. Our reference point is the Bible. It says far more on marriage and the home than people ever dream. God placed a brain between your ears, and he expects you to use it. To a large degree, action controls emotions. Consequently, right action brings right feelings. Jesus

said, "Love one another" (John 13:34). You see—it's something you do. It's commanded! Love is a complex emotion that can be learned. Jesus didn't say, "Love one another when you feel like it."

Let's apply this principle of behavior and feelings to the area of forgiveness, as another example. Jesus said: "When ye stand praying, forgive . . ." (Mark 11:25). Now that is a command. You obey it to feel better, but suppose you don't feel like forgiving someone? Do it anyway! Jesus didn't say, "If you feel like it, forgive." Your action is more important than your feeling.

Another reason for forgiveness is seen in verse 26. "If ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses." Someone said: "A marriage is made up of two good forgivers." Real forgiveness is early, complete, and like a canceled note.

Perhaps the more you know your own weaknesses, failures, and sins, the more forgiving you are. Genuine humility is being willing to take the first step, admit the blame, and start again with a clean slate.

Men often wait until they feel right to love their wives, but God says, "Husbands, love your wives" (Eph. 5:25). Notice God doesn't say anything about feelings. God's Word never changes; it provides us with the absolutes of life. God has specific standards of right and wrong. For example, lying is wrong. It's always wrong—in every place and in every age of history. Likewise, laws for marriage given by a good and gracious God at the dawn of human history are unchanged, as Jesus explained to the Pharisees in Matthew 19:1-9. Furthermore, extramarital and premarital sex are both wrong in the sight of God. The one who defends either is arguing for self-indulgence. Selfishness is the basis of nearly every marital problem. It's the essence of sin—the worm in every apple. It's wanting my own way—with sex, money, time, decisions, etc. Selfishness always seeks a personal victory rather than a stronger relationship with the spouse. Therefore, unselfish love on the part of both partners is a necessary component for a stable marriage.

Part Two: The Woman's Role

In the Genesis record we are told that the woman was created to be man's helper. "The LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him" (Gen. 2:18). Man's loneliness was the first thing pronounced not good. When Adam was lonely God created for him, not ten friends but one wife. Someone said: "The only thing worse than being alone is to be with the wrong person."

The Genesis record continues: "And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh thereof. And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh. And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed" (vv. 21-25).

Observe, the first woman came out of man. After that man came out of woman. The same hands that formed Adam built the rib into a woman. Observe too that the part was taken from Adam's side. As theologians have pointed out through the centuries, the woman belongs by man's side, not under his feet or on his head. Husband and wife become one in marriage. One is never fully complete without the other. She is wholly dependent upon her husband. She needs him for strength and security. Man plus woman plus God equals the Biblical concept of marriage.

Adam Names Cattle, Birds, and Beasts (vv. 19, 20)

Perhaps it is significant that God had Adam name the animals before giving him a wife—maybe God wanted to demonstrate Adam's incompleteness. Certainly it would help give Adam a sense of appreciation for the woman God was about to create for him. It helped him feel more keenly his aloneness as he named the animals. No companion was found for the man. Consequently, God created the only one who could meet Adam's needs. Woman, however, was not an afterthought on God's part. Look upon your mate always as God's provision for your needs, as his cure for your aloneness.

Eve was beautiful, lovely, and desirable—the complement of Adam's need. Women should enjoy the role God has given them. Well-adjusted women do. They want to feel attractive and desirable. In fact, one doctor claims he can cure a woman of almost every complaint simply by telling her it is a sign of old age.

After the fall, God's judgment upon man was, in part: "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread" (Gen. 3:19). Although it is man's responsibility to provide for his family, some men spend too much time at it, at the expense of neglecting their wives and children. "Troubles in marriage often start when a man is so busy earning his salt that he forgets his sugar."

Marriage is a sacred relationship founded in the very heart of Scripture. It is indeed remarkable that a relationship described so accurately centuries ago by Moses is still rooted in eternal truth. The people of Hollywood did not invent sex.

God made them male and female. When he brought Eve to Adam, he didn't give them a lecture on the birds and the bees. Rather, he said, "Here is Eve. She was taken from your side, and she is to remain by your side to be your helper and to meet your needs."

I suppose more jokes have been advanced about marriage than anything else. Such as: "The couple was getting along fine until she came home." "Not every man who dives into the sea of matrimony brings up a pearl." "Married men don't live longer; it just seems longer." The late Lyndon B. Johnson, president of the United States, gave this advice on marriage: "I have learned that only two things are necessary to keep one's wife happy. First, let her think she's having her way. Second, let her have it." Someone said: "Women can never be as successful as men; they have no wives to advise them."

Five Steps to a Happier Marriage

1. Learn to listen to what your mate says.
2. Have a frank daily discussion together.
3. Know what is important to each other.
4. Pay your partner compliments often.
5. Make your partner feel important.

In her book *The Total Woman*, Marabel Morgan, a 37-year-old woman, says that one can be a total woman by practicing the four A's: accept him, admire him, appreciate him, and adapt to him. I'd like to paraphrase some of what she has said on these four important points.

1. Accept Him

Write out two lists—one of his faults and one of his virtues. Throw away the faults and think only of his virtues. Most women marry a man with every intention of changing him. She spends years doing just that, rounding off the edges, suggesting what he should do and how he should act, but it doesn't work. As a result the husband crawls into his shell to protect himself. A man needs to be accepted as he is, exactly. This will melt the barriers between you.

She suggests that a husband may say: "Stop nagging; I'm your husband, not your son." It's hard to feel romantic toward a second mother. That attitude can drive a man to retreat to the golf course, the office, or another woman. Nagging is the opposite of acceptance. A man considers it worse than being nibbled to death by a duck. If you want your man to succeed, choose to accept him. Tolerance isn't acceptance. He needs your acceptance most of all during times of apparent failure. Choose to support him.

Never compare him with another man. He'll never confide in you if he feels you're being critical or trying to change him. That approach ruins communication, Mrs. Morgan says. Life is too short to dwell on another's weaknesses; concentrate on his strengths.

2. Admire Him

Psychiatrists tell us a man's most basic needs outside of warm sexual love are approval and admiration. Women need to be loved; men need to be admired. Many American males are like empty cups emotionally, unable to express their real feelings. Fill his empty cup with admiration, Marabel advises.

"Let . . . the wife see that she reverence her husband" (Eph. 5:33). "Reverence,"

according to the dictionary, means: "to respect, honor, esteem, adore, praise, enjoy, admire." Compliments will encourage him to talk. Moreover, listen when he talks; put down your magazine. Your nagging may have taken the wind out of his sail. He needs your compliments to restart his engine. Self cries: "Love me; meet my needs." Love says: "Allow me to meet your needs."

3. *Appreciate Him*

"It's only when a woman surrenders her life to her husband, reveres him and worships him, that she becomes really beautiful to him." The greatest attribute is loyalty; the worst is ingratitude. An ungrateful wife is no joy to her husband, so say thank you often.

Do you really appreciate the basics that your husband provides? Most husbands work hard. Commend him in areas where he does well! Don't let rights keep you from being grateful. Jesus said: "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35). This admonition is applicable in marriage.

4. *Adapt to Him*

The husband is king and his wife is queen. When he is home, make his home so attractive he won't want to leave—he won't want to stop by the bar on the way home and drink with the boys. You girls who are planning marriage might want to capitalize on that.

What causes most problems in your marriage? Marabel says, "I find the conflict between two separate egos is usually the culprit, your viewpoint versus his viewpoint." Extra money is available. He says, "I want a new car"; she says, "Oh, no you don't; I want new carpets for the house." There is a conflict! In all marriages conflict will come, so it's wise to be prepared to handle it.

"You wives must submit to your husband's leadership in the same way you submit to the Lord" (Eph. 5:22, LB). No one says you have to get married. If you don't wish to adapt to a man, it's better to stay single. In some cities about as many people are getting divorced as are getting married. Apparently, some should not marry.

God ordained man to be head of the family, its president, and the wife its vice-president. Every organization has a leader and the family is no different in that respect. You cannot alter or improve this arrangement. The wife is no slave. In a king-queen relationship, the queen is certainly not his slave. She too sits on a throne and the king relies heavily on her. In many marriages, nevertheless, the woman rules the roost. Someone said, "My wife and I have had a very simple relationship through the years. I rule the roost, and she rules the rooster."

Some girls are brought up to believe that no man can be trusted, and this has caused problems in marriage. This is probably the result of poor sex education on the part of the mothers, or a lack of it altogether. A man doesn't want a doormat for a wife. Doormats are unhappy people because people keep wiping their feet on them. A husband wants a wife with dignity and opinions too.

Abraham is known throughout the earth as founder of a great nation, but a portion of his greatness must be credited to Sarah who is held up as an example to Christian wives.

"Wives, fit in with your husband's plans; for then if they refuse to listen when you talk to them about the Lord, they will be won by your respectful, pure behavior. Your godly lives will speak to them better than any words. Don't be concerned

about the outward beauty that depends on jewelry, or beautiful clothes, or hair arrangement. Be beautiful inside, in your hearts, with the lasting charm of a gentle and quiet spirit which is so precious to God. That kind of deep beauty was seen in the saintly women of old, who trusted God and fitted in with their husbands' plans. Sarah, for instance, obeyed her husband Abraham, honoring him as head of the house. And if you do the same, you will be following in her steps like good daughters and doing what is right; then you will not need to fear (offending your husbands). You husbands must be careful of your wives, being thoughtful of their needs and honoring them as the weaker sex. Remember that you and your wife are partners in receiving God's blessings, and if you don't treat her as you should, your prayers will not get ready answers" (1 Pet. 3:1-7, LB)

The husband is the recognized leader in the home. Feelings of resentment growing from selfish conduct in the home make effective prayer impossible (v. 7b). When his need for an attractive and available wife is met, he'll be so grateful that he will begin to meet your needs. Be attractive but also available. If you gad about all the time and are seldom home, you are not very available. You can't get on every bandwagon that comes to town, and be available to your husband.

Look to your husband for strength and protection. There is no universal panacea that guarantees happiness in marriage. Only charlatans have bottled formulas to ease all pain.

The writer appreciated these four A's from a chapter in Marabel Morgan's book, *The Total Woman*.

Some have asked about use of makeup and hairdos in light of this passage from 1 Peter 3:1-7. I realize that some are opposed to these things, but I am not. If makeup and having her hair done gives a woman a lift and builds her confidence, I'm all for it. As is generally the case, extremes should be avoided, but if the barn needs painting, you should paint it.

As a Wife, Use the Abilities God Has Given You

To contribute her best, a wife must be willing to work with the abilities God has given to her. When she has a healthy self-acceptance, she is able to see the good things in her marriage and build on them. This also opens the way for a deep sharing with her husband, because he no longer doubts his acceptance. Someone said: "The best thing about some men is their wives."

Everyone needs understanding. That's an interesting word. Reverse it and it says "standing under"—"to support." As a wife be understanding; be supportive of your husband. When he loses his job, or is having other problems, be supportive of him. Every husband needs a good listener; a follower, not a fighter. He needs her reassurance and her point of view. Moreover, he will appreciate a neatly kept house. Someone said, "Housework is something a wife does that nobody notices unless she doesn't do it."

One man who took care of the children for one day wrote this report: "Opened the door for the kids 106 times, shouted "Stop that noise" 172 times, settled 17 quarrels, wiped 19 noses, answered 145 questions, lost my temper 57 times, tied shoelaces 16 times, changed diapers 16 times, felt like spanking them ? times, etc., etc. Was I happy to see her back!" "All of us have seen a few brides who should have kept the bouquet and thrown away the groom."

Many husbands work with secretaries who are well dressed; they look their best. Now if the wife is not well dressed, she puts herself in an unfavorable comparison.

When he comes home, look your very best—make that the highlight of the day. According to one psychiatrist, plump girls make the best wives.

Then, too, make sure that you don't reject him in favor of the children. God never intended that the children should push him out of his place. This often happens, although it creates an abnormal situation in the home.

Ten Commandments for Wives

1. Learn the real meaning of love.
2. Give up your dreams of a perfect marriage and work toward a good marriage.
3. Discover your husband's personal, unique needs and try to meet them.
4. Abandon all dependency upon your parents and all criticism of his relatives.
5. Give praise and appreciation instead of seeking it.
6. Surrender possessiveness and jealousy.
7. Greet your husband with affection instead of complaints and demands.
8. Abandon all hope of changing your husband through criticism or attack.
9. Outgrow the princess syndrome.
10. Pray for patience.—*Cecil Osborne.*

Part Three: The Man's Role

1. *Husbands, Love Your Wives*

Three times in Ephesians 5, husbands are instructed to love their wives: "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it. . . . So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. . . . Let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself" (vv. 25, 28, 33). Among other things, this passage teaches husbands to love their wives "as Christ . . . loved the church." Have you husbands taken the effort to find out how Christ loved the church? The best thing a husband can do for his wife is to love her, and the best thing a wife can do for her husband is to respond to his love. "You wives must learn to adapt yourselves to your husbands, as you submit yourselves to the Lord, for the husband is the head of the wife in the same way that Christ is head of the church and savior of his body. The willing subjection of the church to Christ should be reproduced in the submission of wives to their husbands. . . . The love a man gives his wife is the extending of his love for himself to enfold her" (vv. 22-28, Phillips). Doubtless, Paul is saying that marriage is a union which is to mirror the love relationship between Christ and the church. In fact, everything mentioned about Christ and the church is true of the husband-and-wife relationship except one—Jesus is "the savior of the body"; the husband is not.

Solomon, the wise man, said: "Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing" (Prov. 18:22). Incidentally, he ought to know; he had enough of them—700 wives and 300 concubines (1 Kings 11:3). Unbelievable!

By the way, a recent survey indicates that the mother's attitude toward her role as homemaker sets the stage for the mood of the rest of the family. Hence the importance of her outlook!

It's probably obvious to most of us that we have two concepts of marriage in this country—the traditional view and the companionship view. In the former, the husband is the head of the home, the authority, the breadwinner, etc., while the wife is the homemaker. In the latter, the couple are more like companions—both work outside the home and contribute to the income, both help with the housework, etc. Moreover, marriage counselors say that good marriages can be established upon either concept provided the particular couple agree on which road their marriage will take.

To be a father is a big job. Under normal circumstances the husband is responsible to be the provider. If he is ill and can't work, God surely understands, but if he is lazy, the Bible issues a serious charge. "If any one does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith, and is worse than an unbeliever" (1 Tim. 5:8, NASB). Certainly, many a good woman has been worked to death because of a shiftless husband. What a man can afford for himself, he can afford for his wife. This attitude will rule out selfishness on his part.

2. *The Husband Is the Head of the Wife*

"The husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church. . . . As the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in

every thing" (Eph. 5:23, 24). The relationship between husband and wife beautifully illustrates the relationship between Christ and the church. The word "husband" comes from an Anglo-Saxon word which means "band of the house." The husband is to bind the family together. He is God's designated spiritual leader in the home. Spirituality is the glue that cements a marriage together.

Most Christian wives want their husbands to take the lead in marriage and family matters, although there are exceptions. The husband, of course, is responsible for stability and a constructive course for the family. Now if he doesn't know where he is going, his wife can't go with him. If he doesn't know what he wants to do, his wife can't help him do it. Nevertheless, women committed to Scripture recognize man's role as leader is God's order. Both were created in God's image, the woman to be a helper to the man. Adam and Eve were equal in dignity, worth, and value—equal in every respect except one—authority. "Unto the woman [God] said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception, in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee" (Gen. 3:16). There is no hint or trace of female inferiority in Scripture, but the role of leadership is clearly assigned to the man, not to the woman. This principle is obvious in the life of Abraham and Sarah. Abraham was the load-bearing member of the team. God interviewed him, not Sarah, to brief him on the divine itinerary for their lives. Abraham functioned as the head of the home, although spiritually they were equal.

Furthermore, to trust your mate gives him or her a feeling of self-worth and acceptance. If husband and wife can depend on each other to testify on each other's behalf, nothing really bad is likely to happen to them. On the other hand, the man or woman whose partner eagerly testifies against him or her is on a destructive course.

Paul gives some advice to young women in Titus 2:4, 5. In fact, he admonished the older women: "Teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands." Peter adds his testimony: "Wives, be in subjection to your own husbands" (1 Pet. 3:1). Here is one of the foundation stones for family harmony. Of course, the husband's attitude at this point is crucial. It would be very hard, I'd think, for the Christian wife to submit to her husband if his attitude is, "Do as I say because God said I'm the boss." That is an unwise approach. Rather, she must feel that he loves her as "Christ . . . loved the church." Then the submissive role will be easy for her. Of course, the husband must convince her of that.

3. *Christ Is the Head of the Man*

"I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God" (1 Cor. 11:3). If you husbands are going to be the head of your wives, make sure that Jesus Christ is *your* head. This is the order set forth in Scripture. I think it is significant that God is the head of Christ. Jesus Christ is the head of the man, and the man is the head of the woman. You can't have a two-headed anything. Moreover, a man without Christ is a headless man.

Certainly, submission is not a word that God gave only to women. All Christians are to submit to other Christians (1 Pet. 5:5; Heb. 13:7, 17). Everyone except God is in submission to someone and he is Sovereign. Even Christ is in submission to God and ever shall be (1 Cor. 15:24-28). Throughout his earthly ministry, he played the role of a submitter. Although the man is to be head in the marital relationship,

he is to be in submission (serve as a helpmate) in other relationships. He is to be in submission to God, his government, his employer, etc. *Husbands, listen to this:* Your submission to Jesus Christ is the best example your wife has to observe—the best means she has to learn. If she is not doing as well as you'd like, check your example. She will not resist placing herself willingly and submissively under a man who loves her as Christ loved the church.

Remember, the man is the one who has to answer to God for leadership in the home. When we are all gathered into God's kingdom, the Lord will never say to a wife: "You did a bad job in leading that family." He will, however, ask her how she functioned on the basis of the role he gave her.

Some students have pointed out that the Greek word *hupotasso*, translated "submit" in Ephesians 5:22, may just as well be translated subordination. It carries not only the concept of dependency but also of arranging all things for benefit of the whole. Submission is, perhaps, only half of the idea. Women who are in subordination to their husbands are not repressed, but are functioning in the role God gave them for the benefit of the whole family unit. In God's mission the family is the key unit, although we have been led to believe it is the church. Subordination means that you have a different responsibility in the family. By the way, children are also in subordination to parents for the purpose of arranging things for the benefit of the whole unit. So submission is not the exclusive responsibility of the woman. It is the life-style of the Christian. The overall question for the woman is, Are you willing to submit to the Lord's plan so you can function properly for the benefit of the whole unit in a marital relationship? The need is to face the basic issue of the Lordship of Christ.

Being in submission to her husband doesn't mean that the wife loses her right to have and express opinions. In fact, a wise husband will consult his wife. A person in authority is seldom wrong to ask for opinions. In my view, that would be a part of good spiritual leadership in a family. For example, if a husband feels that he should move to the suburbs or change jobs, he should certainly discuss it with his wife before any decision is made.

If a husband loves his wife, he will be considerate and kind to her. "Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them" (Col. 3:19). He will show tenderness always; he will never be hard or harsh. Love is never rough or tough; never rude or crude. It is tender, kind, and gentle. You'll need to lean on your husband in young life. If not, he may not be there to lean on later. Besides, he needs your submissiveness.

Each couple has to decide how decisions will be made in their marriage. In our home for example, if we were to buy a new car, I'd probably decide on the make, engine, and transmission, and Hilda would decide on the color. My talent for matching colors is hidden in my toes. It hasn't been discovered yet, but I keep hoping. The point is, decide how you are going to make decisions in your marriage so decision making can be a smooth operation.

What Does a Wife Want in a Husband?

1. She Wants a Husband Who Understands and Respects Her Emotional Needs

The two—the husband and the wife—are made differently. Don't expect your wife to think and act as you do. Women tend to talk about their emotions and feelings while men talk about things that are logical and reasonable. You want a happy marriage? Then you must try to understand your wife and how she func-

partner unless he is very hard of hearing or the house is on fire. To rush blindly into heated words can hurt, and to cover up our feelings may invite a festering sore. Honest expression is healthier in the long run. Communication is based on complete acceptance of your marriage partner. After all, "What you are in the home, you are."

When conflicts come in your marriage (as they do in all), it doesn't mean that you should separate or get a divorce. We live our lives on the basis of principle, not change. The Bible has given us some principles about marriage and the home. I believe these principles should be honored and agreed upon when the couple marry. The Bible flows out of events of life; the Bible is about people. Some great men and women are mentioned in Scripture. Most of them were married. God's Word flows out of the lives of people.

Building a healthy marriage with preventive "medicine" is never easy, but if a couple are motivated to believe that God can heal their marriage, followed by hard work by both husband and wife, divorce is seldom if ever necessary.

Communication can be called the core of any successful marriage. When you fail to listen to each other and to talk to each other, there is deep trouble ahead. Generally a marriage can survive large problems in the open better than small ones buried and smoldering within. Thinking together is more important than thinking alike. To communicate well means to rise to the level of honesty about money, fears, wishes, motivations, sex feelings and responses, as well as mistakes, resentments, and misunderstandings. Someone said: "Your enemies will talk, but your friends will listen." "A good listener is not only popular everywhere, but after awhile he knows something."

If your spouse is not talking to you enough, ask him or her, "Honey, what is wrong with me?" You'll get a response, so be prepared to take it as it comes. It may not be what you want to hear, but learn from it.

In his book, *Talk to Me*, Dr. Charlie Shedd says the best ways to keep a husband from talking are:

- a. Compare him to someone more successful.
- b. Criticize him for something he can't change.
- c. Compare his family unfavorably with yours.
- d. Mention old boyfriends.
- e. Tell him about your problems the moment he comes home.
- f. Tell him how he should have done it (pp. 57-59).

This book is written especially for wives whose husbands don't talk to them. He gives some candid suggestions on how to get words out of the mouths of husbands.

In my opinion, all silence is not bad. In fact, true friendship comes when silence between two people is comfortable.

4. A Woman Wants First Place in His Affections

A wife wants her husband to like being with her; she wants his love, preferring her to anyone else; she wants him single-minded, not attracted to other women in a personal way. He will never run her down in public; never joke at her expense.

A woman wants in marriage, beyond all else, the security of love. Accordingly, the wise husband will major not on, "Submit to me because I'm the boss," but in a thousand ways saying, "You are special in my life." What wife could resist responding favorably to that approach?

Ten Commandments for Husbands

1. Treat your wife with strength and gentleness.
2. Give ample praise and reassurance.
3. Define the areas of responsibility.
4. Avoid criticism.
5. Remember the importance of little things.
6. Recognize her need for togetherness.
7. Give her a sense of security.
8. Recognize the validity of her moods.
9. Cooperate with her in every effort to improve your marriage.
10. Discover her particular, individual needs and try to meet them.

—Cecil Osborne.

Part Four: The Children's Role

Scripture says: "Lo, children are an heritage of the LORD: and the fruit of the womb is his reward. . . . Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them" (Psa. 127:3-5). In Bible times children were looked upon as a blessing, while barren women felt they were under a curse.

High above the launching pad, at least nine months in the future, the first child may come to join the family circle. Now the two that became one have become one again in a third. This child is their child—so very special. Children have brought happiness and satisfaction to many homes. Sad to say, this is not always true. The Lord blessed the writer and his wife Hilda with two lovely girls, Rachel and Rebekah. They have brought much joy and sunshine to our home.

Someone said, "Children need parents' presence more than their presents." Certainly presents are never a substitute for parents. Children need to be high on parents' priority list. By the way, child raising is just as much a parental partnership as getting children in the first place. Children are a product of both parents; they need both. Someone said, "The trouble with being a parent is that by the time you become experienced you're already unemployed." I believe that most parents feel that if they could run their children through the second time they could do a better job.

The Bible is God's manual for human behavior in all areas of life. I'd like to share with you now three passages that speak specifically to our subject—children.

1. *Ephesians 6:1-4, NASB*

"Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honor your father and mother (which is the first commandment with a promise). . . . And, fathers, do not provoke your children to anger; but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord."

Among other things, this passage says fathers are not to provoke their children to anger. If one provokes adults, we can usually get away from him. As adults, we are usually free to pick and choose our relationships with people. Put yourself in the place of a child who is being provoked by parents. He is helpless; he has no recourse. Provoked or not, he must stay with them, and that is a tough spot for anyone.

Children, moreover, tend to treat parents as parents have treated them. Parents who are disrespectful, overdemanding, and sarcastic tend to have children who behave the same way toward their parents and others. These others may be their playmates, teachers at school, or other "authority figures" in their lives which children substitute for their parents. Incidentally, this principle is working in your children now. It was at work in you when you were growing up; it shaped your attitude toward your parents. Most of us treat another adult with respect. After all, if we don't, he is likely to break off the relationship, and we don't like to lose friends, so we learn to control ourselves (most of the time). Moreover, we don't insult or belittle adults because they are capable of sharp verbal retaliation and in some cases physical violence. With children, however, it's different. They don't seem to have any rights as far as adults are concerned.

I read a case study the other day which concerned a mother who went into her daughter's room, and found the room a real mess. The daughter's name was Mary. Try to picture the scene. Most mothers can relate to this. After looking at the messy room, the mother said: "Mary, you certainly keep a neat ceiling." That's real tact! It gives some insight into that mother's attitude. I suppose most mothers would have hit the ceiling. It's so much better to commend children than condemn and criticize them. When you condemn and criticize a child he will wither and die, but when you commend and praise him, he will blossom and bloom all over. That's just plain human nature which adults never outgrow. You may dislike the behavior, moreover, but love the person always. Someone said, "Children may tear up a house, but they never break up a home." We have gone through two teen-agers at our house, and anyone who has done that is some kind of an authority, but I'm not sure what kind. Both experience and Scripture are good teachers.

The Right Order

As marriage counselors continue to point out, partnership precedes parenthood. That is to say, a man is a husband first, a father second; a woman is a wife first, a mother second. Before you can be an adequate partner you must be an adequate person. A strong marriage, furthermore, precedes a strong family. In premarital counseling, I encourage a couple to be married two or three years before the first child arrives. **THE RIGHT ORDER: Adequate person, good partner, good parent.**

Recognized authorities on the family unit also point out that marriage is permanent, parenthood is temporary; marriage is central, parenthood is secondary; marriage is the hub, children are the spokes. A child-centered home is poor training for the child and poor insurance for the marriage also. Make no mistake! Your partner is first, before the children or the job. Studies indicate that parents who put one another first, before their children, will tend to have children who are more content than parents who put the children first. This certainly is God's order! Furthermore, being overly important to a parent is too heavy a responsibility for a child. Besides, it may make the other mate jealous and cause emotional distance between the parents. Children learn about marriage by the way parents relate to one another. "The most important thing a father can do for his children is to love their mother."

Three Pointers for Parents

1. Show affection to one another in front of the children.
2. Put one another first—maintain your couplehood.
3. Observe marital ethics—don't criticize or depreciate the mate to the children or before others.

If the mother is constantly criticizing the father, how can the son accept his father? As might be expected, the son may fear taking the male role in marriage later on and look at himself as a passive nonentity. He may avoid marriage altogether or, if he does marry, he will be a very poor marriage risk.

Abraham Lincoln once said: "There is just one way to bring up a child in the way he should go and that is to go that way yourself." As parents, we must be models for our children, and models we will be. Our only choice is, will we be good ones or bad ones? Surely the most important structure in the Lord's economy is the family unit. The factory that produces the most important product is the home. In God's

mission to mankind, the family is the key unit, although we've been led to believe it's the church. I believe more and more that the church needs to say a lot about the family unit—about husbands, about wives, about children, about what their roles should be. We've pushed the idea to separate the family. Perhaps we need to reverse that and have church programs to bring the whole family together in Bible study. The children may think we are nuts, but I for one would like to see it tried. At any rate, we need to pull the family closer together. Someone said, "Home should be a retreat to which a child can return in triumph or defeat, in victory or in disgrace, and know that he will be loved." Someone else said, "We can easily forgive a child who is afraid of the dark; the real tragedy of life is when men are afraid of the light."

"Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother" (Eph. 6:1, 2). Dependent children should "obey" their parents; we should all honor our parents. The parents are a child's first authority. If he doesn't have to listen to them, why should he listen to a teacher or policeman later on? Perhaps the biggest danger confronting children today is the example being set by adults. Lukewarm Christian homes do not produce consecrated Christian young people because inconsistency is confusing and unimpressive to children. Accordingly, our best Christian young people come from either consecrated Christian homes or non-Christian homes.

2. Deuteronomy 6:6-9, NASB

"These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. And you shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up. And you shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be frontals on your forehead." Although this passage was given to the Israelites as they were about to go in and take the land, it speaks to parents today, especially fathers. The responsibility for Christian education rests on the home. Of course the church is ready and willing to work with the parents.

An old cliché says: "Habit is a cable. We weave a strand each day." Attitudes can become habits. That's the point of the cliché. A father should build up the mother in the eyes of the children by whispering in their ears: "Go help your mother with those packages," or, "Open the door for your mother." Then in turn Mother can build up Father by telling the children what a thoughtful, worthwhile person he is. Make him look good in their eyes—even better than he is. This is the role of a loving wife which pays real dividends. The children will be more respectful and stable when they grow up in an atmosphere like that. In our society today, many fathers are regarded as cash registers and mothers as maids. Sad, but true! Children are our most precious possessions—the greatest investment we have. In dollars and cents alone, which is insignificant, it costs thousands of dollars to bring them through childhood diseases, doctor bills, to feed, clothe, and educate them.

Discipline

Don't expect children to behave like adults. That's why God gave them parents. Some parents don't discipline because of fear. "Discipline a child with love or the world will do it without love." It may be the policeman on the corner or the principal at school. I believe we should discipline immediately without anger. It is proof of our love. Discipline "Johnny on the Spot," and that is evidence of your love. If you don't

love a child, just let him run the streets and be whatever he wants to be. If you do love him, you'll want to give him direction by starting him on the right road. Fear and anger are big emotional problems in the home. Worry, anxiety, and fear need to be replaced with faith, hope, and peace.

Your children will be like you. There are few successful adults who were not first successful children. Everyone, moreover, needs self-respect and a feeling of self-worth. No one enjoys being humiliated, put down, or squelched. Children are people too! They will tend to treat parents as parents have treated them, and they will also tend to treat others as their parents have treated them. When a young person is married, or goes away to college, he may learn for the first time that his parents look at him as a real person.

Why can't this start earlier? from birth up? Certainly there is equal worth in all members of the family.

One man said to his neighbor: "My father believed in stern discipline. If I did something wrong, he provided the discipline and I provided the stern." Someone said: "Any child will succeed if he is patted on the back often enough, low enough, and hard enough."

Things Never, Never (well, hardly ever) to Do

Don't threaten—you decimate your own authority.

Don't bribe—bargaining usually makes you the loser.

Don't lose your temper—a clear demonstration of lack of control.

Don't use sarcasm or embarrassment—the fastest way to demolish a relationship.

Don't dash their dreams—your ticket into the generation gap.—*Dr. Howard G. Hendricks.*

"Every young man should learn to take criticism. He'll probably be a parent someday."

3. Colossians 3:18-21, Phillips

"Wives, adapt yourselves to your husbands, that your marriage may be a Christian unity. Husbands, be sure you give your wives much love and sympathy; don't let bitterness or resentment spoil your marriage. As for you children, your duty is to obey your parents, for at your age this is one of the best things you can do to show your love for the Lord. Fathers, don't overcorrect your children, or they will grow up feeling inferior and frustrated." Here again we have some wise counsel for wives, husbands, and children clearly spelled out for us.

Children have the habit of growing up and having families of their own. Someone said, "A child is someone who passes through your life and then disappears into an adult." Don't spend too much time looking back. The family you came from is not as important as the family you're going to have.

The average child has seen 9,000 hours of TV before he enters school. TV is so very persuasive. We cannot ignore its impact! It's hard for adult viewers to keep the monster under control. Parents need to give their children more privileges and responsibilities as they come up through the years. The trick is to give them enough rope to grow and develop properly but not enough to hang themselves. Dr. Manfred Adler, prominent Cleveland child psychologist, says: "The child who has been helped too much is constantly needy of other's help and support. . . . This is the youngster who often falls apart if left to his own devices in coping with life."

Someone said: "Children seldom misquote you; they just repeat word for word what you should not have said." One teen-ager said: "I was thinking all these horrible thoughts about my parents when suddenly it hit me—If they're all that bad how come I'm so wonderful?"

An unknown author wrote a poem entitled "*Children Learn What They Live.*" It goes like this:

If a child lives with criticism—he learns to condemn.

If a child lives with hostility—he learns to fight.

If a child lives with fear—he learns to be apprehensive.

If a child lives with pity—he learns to feel sorry for himself.

If a child lives with ridicule—he learns to be shy.

If a child lives with jealousy—he learns to feel guilty.

BUT—

If a child lives with tolerance—he learns to be patient.

If a child lives with encouragement—he learns to be confident.

If a child lives with praise—he learns to be appreciative.

If a child lives with acceptance—he learns to love.

If a child lives with approval—he learns to like himself.

If a child lives with recognition—he learns it is good to have a goal.

If a child lives with honesty—he learns what truth is.

If a child lives with fairness—he learns justice.

If a child lives with security—he learns to have faith in himself and those about him.

If a child lives with friendliness—he learns the world is a nice place in which to live.

Part Five: Right Attitudes

Marriage is God's formula for man's happiness. He so ordained it at the creation of Adam and Eve. After making Adam, God said: "It is not good that the man should be alone" (Gen. 2:18). Then he made Eve and brought her to the man. When Adam saw Eve he wasn't about to say, "I'll stay here with the flowers and watch the birds." At least I don't feel that that was his response. In fact, I'm convinced that she excited Adam right down to the soles of his feet. "She shall be called WO-MAN or woman" (Heb., *Isha*, margin, v. 23), Adam exclaimed, as he saw his bride for the first time. That need in Adam's life was filled by the Lord God through the wife he gave to him.

A happy marriage provides a full life and contributes to the physical and emotional wholeness God planned for us. Society did not invent marriage as a matter of convenience, as some of the secular people are saying today. I'd like to share with you now some right attitudes for marriage.

1. Learn From the Past But Don't Live in It

Quick and ready forgiveness is essential for any good marriage. Some husbands and wives, however, have the bad habit of bringing up the past and throwing it in each other's face. When you forgive, forget also! "And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you" (Eph. 4:32). This is an outstanding verse for any Christian, but I feel it works especially well in the marital relationship. Why not make it a motto for your marriage?

Jesus Christ is interested in every area of your life—the physical, emotional, financial, and spiritual. The Lordship of Christ offers a point of reference for any marriage. It also offers a lifetime of growth. In a good marriage, you don't place blame for life's tragedies. Often this is what happens. Couples are more interested in placing the blame than in solving the problem. We are the sum of all our experiences. We are, right now, what we have been becoming through the months and years of our lives. People often use their background, moreover, as a crutch. They spend much time going back into it—"I had this kind of father, or mother, or family, or these kinds of experiences." Well, none of us have perfect backgrounds, but one doesn't have to perpetuate mistakes of early life. Learn from the past but don't live in it. The family you came from is not as important as the one you are going to have. As a marriage partner, choose to go the second mile and build a meaningful relationship with your spouse.

Obviously, marriage has acquired a bad image in our time, but the problem is not with the divine institution of marriage. The problem is with the personnel. Incidentally, surveys show that individuals who share the same religious beliefs have five times as good a chance of staying married as those who do not. Aside from accepting Jesus as Savior and Lord, the greatest decision to be faced in life is the selection of a lifetime partner, a husband or a wife.

2. Act Your Wage

Let's talk about finances! Is the money His or Hers, or is it Ours? A husband's

income is extremely important to him. It's the only tangible measure of his success as family breadwinner.

The family has to be financed, which necessitates a budget. Careful money management forces a family to spend time thinking about values and goals. By all means, make a budget or plan; appoint a bookkeeper. It doesn't make much difference who writes the checks as long as agreement is reached on how the money is spent. Make the children a part of the team. Most important of all, put giving to God first.

The first step in planning a budget is to divide annual income by twelve to determine the amount you can spend each month. By the way, don't include bonuses, gifts, or other "unhatched chickens." If monthly expenses exceed income, simply increase income or decrease spending. Most couples know this, but perhaps lack the willpower to cut spending. Consequently, both become irritable and arguments develop easily under the pressure and tension.

One woman said: "I lived with my husband several months, but I never knew him until I asked him for money." A wife should have some money of her own and should not have to give account of it to anyone. I'm thinking of a home where the husband works and the wife is the homemaker. Certainly, easy availability of credit has caused many couples to go in over their heads. We must distinguish between wants and needs.

Doubtless, money can be a real issue, especially if one feels it means security and must be saved, and the other believes it should be enjoyed. The husband may see his wife as a spendthrift and put the brakes on; she responds by overspending to compensate.

One man said: "My wife is always asking for money. It's money, money, money." His friend asked: "What in the world does she want with all that money?" The man replied, "I don't know; I never give her any."

Unless you know your way around financially, you are headed for trouble with a capital T!

3. Follow Directions on a Jar of Salad Dressing

"Keep Cool but Don't Freeze." Remember that when stress and tension come your way. I'm talking about communication. Learn to discuss your conflicts in a constructive way. Stick to the issue that triggered the argument. Don't revive previous issues or hurts. Moreover, don't hit below the belt by criticizing and attacking each other as persons. We all have our tender spots. The healthy kind of conflict uses words, not to kill but to dig out what's bothering the other person—that deep-down, bottled-up feeling.

In the next place, handle conflict when you have sufficient time and privacy. Out of constructive argument can come a better understanding of each other's needs, a greater feeling of security, and a more meaningful relationship. A good marriage offers a man and woman the best of everything. Marriage is too sacred and wonderful to neglect. Husbands and wives, talk to each other! Communication was no problem during your courting days and it need not be now.

Surely every failure in Christian marriage can be traced back to departure from God's Word. Either one or both rejected God's plan for marriage. Remember the Bible is God's manual for all of our relationships. Our failures can be corrected by the power of God in conjunction with a cooperative individual. God will give you the power, IF you are willing to trust him and cooperate with him. If we think God is

going to do everything for us, we're in bad shape. "For we are labourers together with God" (1 Cor. 3:9).

Quite obviously, no one person wins in marriage. The couple succeeds or fails together. Marriage is a game in which both can win and both can lose, for the two, God says, have become one.

Criticism is a danger area, especially if one of the couple lacks self-esteem. When a partner doesn't feel good about himself, he assumes his spouse doesn't accept him either. Any criticism by the spouse reinforces the feeling. Hostility results.

4. *The Physical-Sexual Aspect*

In this area one's attitude is of prime importance. God made us sexual beings. The sex drive, furthermore, knows nothing about marital status. Single, married, widowed, divorced—we are all sexual beings. You won't lose all your sex drive simply because you are no longer married. In fact, the pattern of sexual expression is extremely difficult to terminate. Contrary to popular opinion, both men and women enjoy sex at sixty and seventy and beyond.

Moreover, our good God who gave us sexual emotions also gave us legitimate modes of expression within the marriage bond. "Usually it is best to be married, each man having his own wife, and each woman having her own husband, because otherwise you might fall back into sin. The man should give his wife all that is her right as a married woman, and the wife should do the same for her husband: for a girl who marries no longer has full right to her own body, for her husband then has his rights to it, too, and in the same way, the husband no longer has full right to his own body, for it belongs also to his wife. So do not refuse these rights to each other" (1 Cor. 7:1-5, LB).

For too long, sexual education has been presented aside from the Bible. The implication often is that God and sex are set against each other. This simply is not true! Under the Mosaic law, when a man married he was to be free of responsibilities for the first year. "When a man hath taken a new wife, he shall not go out to war, neither shall he be charged with any business: but he shall be free at home one year, and shall cheer up his wife which he hath taken" (Deut. 24:5). Some translations say, "He shall give happiness to his wife." The implication is that the couple should enjoy sexual love the first year. Furthermore, the Song of Solomon (Old Testament Book) has as its primary purpose to present God's viewpoint of sexual love in marriage. The book should be interpreted literally as a love song that celebrates the holy institution of sexual love and the sanctity of the physical aspects of marriage.

"Most discord in the marriage act can be attributed to one of three things: ignorance; selfishness; or fear."—*Tim LaHaye*. If this concept be accepted, these three areas should be given special attention. I received my sex education on the back of the school bus and in the boys' locker room. It wasn't too professional!

In the next place, our society has reduced love to sex. Often men equate the two; a man sometimes interprets sexual refusal as total rejection. Nevertheless, the marriage act is an exclusive experience the couple share uniquely with each other. By the way, if a woman wants to hurt her husband, there are three areas in which he is especially vulnerable—money, sex, and children. If you want to "play dirty" and really clobber him, these are the areas to strike. You women, of course, already know that.

"Do you know how a female rhino selects her male rhino? She is nearsighted, so

when she sees her beau she first backs up. Then she charges him at thirty miles an hour, hitting him broadside and knocking him to the ground. Then she proceeds to gouge and step on him. While he is literally bleeding and bruised he gets the message, 'She loves me.'

"The Christian woman is not this way. She is feminine. She is gentle, sweet, and kind because she knows what femininity is all about. There are very few men who would want a drill sergeant for a wife."—*William Coleman*.

Someone said: "Most couples with marital problems kick each other instead of attacking their problems." Then, too, sometimes couples are more anxious to place blame than solve their conflicts. Adjustments need to be made in four basic areas: mental, spiritual, emotional, and physical. Humanists neglect the spiritual and treat man like an animal.

While marriage partners should be friends, they should be more than that. One can live with a sister or mother and have friendship, but in marriage we have a deep sexual hunger and attraction which gives married love its unique meaning. Sex, furthermore, is not a weapon to dominate another. Neither is it a reward for good behavior, but the deepest, fullest expression of marital love.

"Love is patient; love is kind and envies no one. Love is never boastful, nor conceited, nor rude; never selfish, not quick to take offence. Love keeps no score of wrongs; does not gloat over other men's sins, but delights in the truth. There is nothing love cannot face; there is no limit to its faith, its hope, and its endurance. Love will never come to an end" (1 Cor. 13:4-8, NEB).

Good communication involves keeping each other's secrets. If either spouse fears exposure, he or she won't talk freely. We treasure the little world which we share alone. Sex is a part of that world. This sacred expression must prove mutually satisfying. If sex is the whole thing, the relationship will fade, but if sex is not there the relationship dwindles away also. Besides, a wife can't win without being submissive. It may be difficult at times, but "love will never fail." It's the greatest gift of all; love makes surrender easy. However, love must be more than just a word in marriage; it must be an experience.

Marital sex as given by our God has three beautiful purposes:

1. Reproduction of children.
2. It expresses the deepest and most meaningful love and devotion.
3. It safeguards the home, the family, and the stability of the nation as a whole.

5. *Keep a Good Balance*

Psychologists say: "Marriage is a seesaw." It's the ability of a husband and wife to "balance out" the total satisfaction each requires with the amount that each is able to give. A major national study of the pattern of conflict—how it smolders, explodes, then escalates toward divorce—was made. It shows that many marriages do break down, then break up when the supply and demand get tilted out of equilibrium. Remember the seesaw! Keep a good balance!

The Bible is a now Book. It was written for our day—this age—the best manual we have for the home. Raising a family is the Lord's work. I think many persons think of the church in one category and the home in another category and never the twain shall meet. That's outright ridiculous! The church is made up of families; they should not be separated. Raising a family is the Lord's work. Meeting the needs of one's spouse is the Lord's work. Guiding a teen-ager through a difficult time is the Lord's work. Guiding one's children is commanded of God. If raising

one's family is not the Lord's work, I don't know what the Lord's work is. Marriage was meant to be the greatest of human relationships. The family, furthermore, is the best building block for a successful society as well as the best building block for a strong church.

In the next place, the issue of who is boss comes out in all kinds of ways. Money is one tool that is used. The husband may make his wife come on bended knee begging for every dime she gets rather than giving her an allowance from each paycheck. That's terribly unfair! Sex is another effective tool. In fact, anything important to a person can be used as a weapon.

The "Work Addict"

A "work addict" feeds the job and starves the marriage. A man can work hard and make a lot of money, but that can be fatal to the marriage. That turns a wife into a widow. In fact, I've had wives tell me: "I feel like a widow." This man has been called a "workaholic." Psychologists say that he has the same emotional hangups that the alcoholic has. The difference is the alcoholic directs his attention toward the bottle, while the "workaholic" directs his attention toward work. To succeed he's willing to arrive early and leave late, leaving the family the ragged edges. Make no mistake! Success at the job *can* mean failure in marriage. Love doesn't thrive on a crumb here and there.

When a man is at work, he is in charge and everybody knows it—he is the boss. The roles are clear cut! However, when the same man comes home and makes the same demands, he is met with, "Get your own Pepsi," or "Why can't you do it?" He finds a different atmosphere altogether. People may not talk back to him at the office, but they do at home. You can't run a home or a church like you run a business. I do believe, however, that some of the principles of good business can be used in the home and at the church.

Studies show that one out of four couples who seek counseling wait until they have separated and the marriage is all but dead. That's one reason why I believe so strongly in premarital counseling. While there is certainly a limit to how much can be done, it gives the pastor or counselor the opportunity to get to know the couple and build a relationship with them. Hopefully they will contact him for help before things get too bad. Of course, he can also take the initiative in keeping in contact with them. Incidentally, authorities say that sex, money, and in-laws are three big trouble spots in marriage. Much conflict also centers around the children and religion. "Looking before leaping" is not only a cliché, it is sound advice for anyone contemplating marriage. Since two thousand couples marry every day, these things need to be discussed freely and intelligently.

Remember, the husband is the head of the home and has the responsibility for leadership, especially in spiritual things, but the reason for authority in anything is not to lord it over someone else. Rather, it's to maintain order and to aid the decision-making process. Authority is for getting things done in an orderly way. That is what Ephesians 5 teaches when it says that "the man is the head of the woman." God gave men and women different roles in life. Scripture nowhere teaches that one is superior and the other inferior. Rather, it teaches that one is feminine and one is masculine.

Jesus was Lord of the disciples, but he did not go around shouting, "I'm the head of the church! I'm the boss and what I say goes!" Women are not second-class citizens; they are in no way inferior to men; both are "heirs together of the grace of life" (1 Pet. 3:7).

Marriage—A Creation Ordinance

One basic concept of marriage, often overlooked by students, is that marriage is a Creation Ordinance for all mankind under God's common grace. If a Jew wishes to get married, he has that right from God. The same is true of a Gentile or Christian. No church, moreover, be it Catholic or Protestant, has the right to elevate marriage to sacramental status. "Marriage is honourable in ALL" (Heb. 13:4). "A man shall leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife; and they shall be one flesh" (Gen. 2:24). Observe that no strings are attached. (Cp. Eph. 5:31; Matt. 19:5.)

Marriage is not a Christian institution only. It is to be honored by all peoples (Heb. 13:4). Marriage was instituted by a good and gracious God for man as man—not for man as Jew, Christian, or Gentile. All men come under the authority of this institution. Accordingly, most marriage ceremonies call attention to the fact that marriage is to be held in honor among ALL MEN. Men may reject God's authority over marriage, or even refuse to acknowledge his existence, but that in no way changes the fact that they are accountable to God for the holy institution of marriage. Likewise, men may deny that they are a creation of God, but they have that relationship just the same. Make no mistake! Marriage was instituted in the Covenant of Creation for all mankind. Does Christian conversion, then, change one's marital status? If so, where? when? how much? to what degree?

Return of Adam's Rib

The one-flesh concept of marriage is derived from Genesis, where Eve was created from Adam's rib. Why was she not created from the dust of the ground as Adam was? God did not create woman to stand as a second Adam; that is, as a second type of humanity, free to determine her own destiny apart from Adam. God created Eve to be Adam's helper. When he created her and gave her to Adam, Adam's flesh and bone returned to him, and Eve found her fulfillment as Adam's helper, and entered into a "one flesh" relationship with him. Consequently, every time a man and woman are united in marriage, Adam's rib returns to his side. The woman is not free to go her own way, but is dependent on her husband. She must allow him to reclaim his rib. After God removed the rib from Adam, the man was no longer complete in himself. The woman whom God made from man's rib is needed to complete the man.

"It has been found that the so-called APPLE on the tree did not cause the trouble in the Garden of Eden. It was the PAIR on the ground."

The Song of Solomon

This unfamiliar Old Testament book is a love song that focuses on sexual love and the sanctity of the physical aspects of marriage. Read it in a modern translation!

Through the years, commentators have interpreted this poetical book as an allegory of Christ and the church. Although this may be a part of its message, it certainly is not the primary one. This concept developed because some had the

idea that sex was not holy and should not be discussed. Consequently, the literal interpretation of the book was rejected because God would never allow a book about sex in the canon of Scripture. The Song of Solomon, I believe, speaks of the physical relationship between husband and wife as holy and beautiful in God's sight. This book should not be ignored for this reason or any other reason.

Three Choices

Quite frankly, for a couple who find themselves in a miserable marriage there are only three options from which to choose:

1. Divorce—the greatest cop out and by far the most immature choice.
2. Tough out the marriage without working to improve it—maintain the status quo; another immature decision, but not quite as irresponsible as divorce.
3. Maturely face up to personal hangups and choose to build an intimate marriage out of the existing one—the only mature choice to make.

What happens if the option of divorce is removed? When we uphold the Biblical concept of marriage, it is amazing how many couples redeem their marriages and begin to build a good relationship out of the old one. Divorce allows the couple to run away from their problems.

Many secular counselors and too many "Christian" counselors choose number one, since it appears to be the easy way out, and usually that's what the counselee wants to hear anyway. Unless one closes his mind to divorce, reconciliation is impossible.

It's not new material that we need, but the ancient material of God's Word. While marriage is a bond, it is a positive bond—a loving, fulfilling, happy bond when built on God's laws. Marriage was once considered a forever thing and only the very troubled or very desperate turned to divorce. Today, however, divorce is common and often accepted. "Marriages are forever" is being replaced by "trial marriages" and "living together arrangements," all of which speak of the crumbling moral standards of the last days. Certainly the church must defend the permanent bond of marriage if we are to be honest with God's Word. We need to put more effort into premarital counseling and marriage enrichment and refuse to become "marriage mills."

Three Major Changes Taking Place in Marriage Today

1. A decline in understanding between marriage partners.
2. The loss of determination to stay married.
3. The development of unrealistic marriage expectations.

—H. Norman Wright, *Communication—Key to Your Marriage*.

Basic Areas That Cause Most Conflicts

1. **Money:** How is the marriage to be supported and who controls the purse strings?
2. **Sex:** How can both find satisfaction and fulfillment?
3. **Children:** How many children for this marriage? Who is responsible for the discipline?
4. **In-Laws:** What about overpossessive parents who are not willing to let their child go? Where will the couple spend holidays?

5. **Power Struggles:** Who is in charge? If the wife works, should her husband help with the housework?
6. **Religion:** Is the couple going to worship regularly? If so, what church should be chosen?
7. **Cultural Clashes:** Suppose one is a college graduate and the other didn't finish high school?
8. **Personality Conflicts:** Do temperaments clash? Do they have the same interests?

Knowing that these basic conflicts appear most often, a couple planning their wedding can kick these things out in the open and discuss them freely with each other and with their pastor. This pastor insists that they do.

Compatibility or Combatability

The union of two persons in marriage has been compared to two rivers flowing smoothly and quietly along until they come together and are joined. As they united, they clashed and hurled themselves at one another, but as the newly formed river continued on its way downstream, it quieted down and flowed smoothly. The two rivers in one now, has become wider and more majestic. This very well illustrates what often happens in a good marriage. The two persons coming from different backgrounds will have disagreements and conflicts, some very rough sailing perhaps, but coming out of them can be a stronger, more stable, more enjoyable relationship.

The Marriage God Planned

In Genesis 2 we see the marriage God planned, but most marriages today are not planned. In fact, most couples spend more time preparing for the wedding than they do for marriage. Let's observe five basic things in the marriage God planned.

1. *Man's Need (Gen. 2:18)*

God saw that it was not good for man to be alone. Alone, man was incomplete! God, man's maker, knows this better than anyone else and has graciously provided for his every need. Marriage is wonderful, but it doesn't solve your problems. It's not supposed to! If one is unhappy before marriage, he will be after marriage. Two people combine their problems when they marry. Now God intends Christian marriage to be wonderful, satisfying, and joyful. He has the power to make it so. Yet a truly happy marriage is not a common thing. We are surprised when a marriage "suddenly" breaks up. We are like the middle-aged man who began to lose his hair. Finally, only one hair was left on his head. He faithfully oiled and massaged that single hair. One morning he got out of bed, and there on the pillow lay his one hair. With great anguish, he called: "Great Scott, I'm bald."

Marriage doesn't fail suddenly because one of the partners suddenly finds someone else more "interesting." It's because the marriage relationship had already broken down. No change in circumstances is going to solve the basic problems in marriage. A better house, more money, moving away from in-laws, or having children will not change much. We must discover the underlying causes of unhappiness that drive partners to alcohol, infidelity, and other escape hatches.

Christian marriage means that I can no longer do as I please. Many, no doubt, make the mistake of thinking they can. Certainly, self-will can take many forms. It can be expressed as hostility, nagging, or irritability. Being afraid to face the real cause of a failing marriage, we choose certain areas of battle: where to squeeze the toothpaste, how to discipline the children, or who spends more money foolishly. Such fights let us express our hostility without getting into the deeper and more painful issues.

2. *Man's Need Provided (vv. 21, 22)*

Eve was the result of an immediate act of God. He took the rib of Adam and made woman from it. Here we find the first surgery. Physicians use various kinds of anesthesia to produce deep sleep. We don't know what God used, but we see divine mercy displayed. The part of Adam, moreover, was taken from his side, not his head or feet, which strongly suggests that the woman belongs beside the man—not on his head or under his feet. After God had made Eve, he "gave her away" in marriage to Adam. Adam didn't willingly seek a wife. God bestowed her upon him.

Interestingly enough, in all but the human race God put the beauty in the male. We have prize roosters or prize stallions, but with mankind the beauty is in the woman, not the man. Someone said: "Women have two extremes: they are either better or worse than men." Be that as it may, man is incomplete without the woman and vice versa.

3. *The Leave and Cleave Rule (vv. 23, 24)*

The Hebrew word translated “cleave” means to “glue himself to.” In marriage, man is to leave father and mother and be glued to his wife. The basic concept of marriage is that God made them male and female. God’s first institution was not the church or school, but the home. And the home is in real danger today! It’s coming apart at the seams. In our society, there is a major breakdown in the home; and the cause is as obvious as empty pews. God’s plan for marriage has been neglected.

Marriage is the only institution that comes from the other side of the fall of man. Society did not invent it. God instituted it. To the Christian, moreover, marriage is more than a legal contract. It’s a lifetime contract in which God has united the two persons.

Most of the efforts toward a good marriage must be made by the couple themselves. One gets out of it no more than he puts into it. Years ago, it seems that we told people what to do without telling how to do it. Now we’ve gone to the other extreme. People refuse to budge until we tell them “how to” to the last detail. Some of them even seem to refuse to think for themselves. Henry Brandt, a Christian psychologist, said: “If one can reason, absorb information, and really wants help, he doesn’t need personal help from me.” The writer agrees with him completely. Sit down and think about what God wants you to do at home, at church, at work. Use what God put between your ears. Another author has suggested that instead of running to a therapist, one should observe some common-sense principles such as exercising, not overworking, and getting enough sleep. He feels that these things should help one handle the less serious problems of daily living. We all are aware of how irritable we become from lack of sleep and overwork. Why not use the common sense that God has given us and solve our own problems? Of course, we should seek Christian counsel when needed; but, after all, a large part of counseling is designed to help one use tools and resources he already has.

4. *The One-Flesh Law (v. 24b)*

This verse is a part of most wedding liturgies. The Living Bible reads: “This explains why a man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife in such a way that the two become one person.” God demonstrated the oneness of the marriage bond by the fact that the part from which Eve was made was taken from Adam—his side. Here, at the beginning of the human race, we see the divine origin and sanctity of marriage: one woman, one man, one flesh. Mathematically, this means that one plus one equals one. It sounds ridiculous in the science of mathematics, but it is a beautiful spiritual truth.

In marriage, we have to relinquish the “I” concept for the “we” idea—“no more twain but one flesh.” This term “one flesh” is used five times in Scripture (Gen. 2:24; Matt. 19:5, 6; Mark 10:8; Eph. 5:31). It has been said that when two people marry they become one, but often the question is, which one? In Christian marriage, Christ is the center: husband, wife, and children can find their proper orbit around him. Genuine love is the basic ingredient in marriage, and it doesn’t vanish when the faults of your partner appear. Perhaps many definitions of love have been given. I like this one: “Love is *giving, forgiving, and forgetting.*” Forgiveness is a two-way street. Successful marriage is built by a team of two good forgivers. None of us is perfect. Someone has said: “Perfect marriages are made in heaven.” Well, they must stay there. We have none here.

Furthermore, mothers and fathers, make sure that you are on the same team. Many are not but are in competition. As mentioned in chapter four, the experts say there are two main views of marriage: the traditional role and the companionship role. In the former, the husband is the authority, the only breadwinner, while the wife cares for the house and children. In the latter, both husband and wife contribute to the income and live more as companions. The experts also point out that good marriages can be found in both roles. The important thing is that the couple agree on which view of marriage is for them. If they disagree on these basics, there is stormy weather ahead. It should be obvious to anyone, moreover, that the transition in our society is toward the companionship role in marriage.

This paragraph is for husbands only. You will never get into God's coming kingdom on your wife's good name. You must accept Christ as your personal Savior. Please don't send your wife and children to Sunday school and church. TAKE THEM! "I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God" (1 Cor. 11:3). Observe this order carefully. The man is the head of the woman provided that Christ is his head. The father has the authority and responsibility for the Christian education of his family. It appears that some husbands confuse authority with superiority. Men are not superior to women.

This paragraph is for women only. Please read 1 Peter 3:1-7, especially verse 4. The meek and quiet spirit is the tool for an unbelieving husband. Many a beautiful woman has opened her mouth and spoiled it all. Yes, the woman can win her husband by her silent preaching. By her beautiful life, a woman can win her husband to her lovely Savior. Christian wives are to be in subjection to their Christian husbands (Eph. 5:21-33).

5. *Let No Man Put Asunder (Matt. 19:4-6)*

Here is Christ's commentary on the union of man and woman in marriage. It's not to be dissolved by man. That's an old statement, but it's truly God's word for all our hearts today. The sacredness of marriage is founded in the very heart of Scripture. When we get a gadget for the home, we often get instructions telling us how to put it together or operate it. Likewise, when God made man, he gave him a Book to go along with him, and the ones who have followed its instructions have found life worth living. The Bible is a NOW BOOK! It speaks to our generation in all of our relationships, especially marriage.

We live in a society of lax morals: love-ins, rock conventions; hippie-type communal living, a growing free love, are all very common. Consequently, many look upon marriage as a short-term experiment. The spirit of the age is against purity of life and sanctity of marriage. Some of the most blatant forms of sensitivity training are being employed to make this way of life seem natural and right, but clearly it's not the way of Christ. The Christian has only one court of appeal—the Bible. It says much about wedlock. There is no lovelier episode in all Scripture than the wedding God planned. "It is not good that the man should be alone."

Marriage, then, in Biblical terms is a life contract. Death alone can break it. "For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband" (Rom. 7:2). The testimony of all the Bible is uniform, consistent, invariable, and changeless.

Ten Rules for a Happy Marriage

1. *Don't Be a Dictator!* The medieval concept of a monarch in the home is of heathen origin.
2. *Don't Be a Mote-Picker!* If you constantly find fault with each other, marital harmony will be impossible.
3. *Don't Be a Battle-Starter!* Arguing and shouting at your partner is an earmark of immaturity. Marriage is for adults only.
4. *Don't Be a Self-Seeker!* Don't claim everything in the home is yours. If you can't share with your partner, whom can you trust?
5. *Don't Be a Talebearer!* Never reveal your partner's faults to friends. If tempted to tell, remember it would be an immoral betrayal.
6. *Don't Be a Lodger!* Don't live with your in-laws. It's not fair to them or yourselves. If you can only afford one room, make that your home!
7. *Don't Be an Iceberg!* Don't stop courting after the honeymoon. Love is like a plant. It must be nourished. If not, it will die!
8. *Don't Be an Autocrat!* Don't always demand your own way. Be considerate of your partner's intelligence. Two are better than one.
9. *Don't Be an Abdicator!* Never shirk your responsibility as a husband, wife, or parent. Abdicators are usually selfish cowards and runaways!
10. *Don't Be a Manikin!* Be manly or womanly. Don't be lacking backbone. Take care of your family and home interests. —Selected.

Beatitudes for Married Couples

Blessed are the husband and wife who continue to be affectionate, considerate, and loving after the wedding bells have ceased ringing.

Blessed are the husband and wife who are as polite and courteous to one another as they are to their friends.

Blessed are they who have a sense of humor, for this attribute will be a handy shock absorber.

Blessed are the married couples who abstain from alcoholic beverages.

Blessed are they who love their mates more than any other person in the world, and who joyfully fulfill their marriage vow of a lifetime of fidelity and mutual helpfulness to each other.

Blessed are they who remember to thank God for their food before they partake of it, and who set aside some time each day for the reading of the Bible and prayer.

Blessed are they who attain parenthood, for children are a heritage of the Lord.

Blessed are those mates who never speak loudly to each other and who make their home a place "where seldom is heard a discouraging word."

Blessed are the husband and wife who faithfully attend the worship service of the church, for their lives shall be greatly enhanced.

Blessed are the husband and wife who can work out their problems of adjustment without interference from relatives.

Blessed is the couple who have a complete understanding about financial matters and who have worked out perfect partnership with all the money under control of both.

Blessed are the husband and wife who humbly dedicate their lives and their home to Christ and practice the teachings of Christ in their home by being unselfish, loyal, and loving.

—*Author Unknown.*

Suggested Reading to Enrich Your Marriage And Strengthen Your Home

| Book | Author | Publisher |
|--|--------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. <i>How To Be Happy Though Married</i> | Tim LaHaye | Tyndale House Publishers |
| 2. <i>Communication—Key to Your Marriage</i> | Norman Wright | Gospel Light |
| 3. <i>Talk to Me</i> | Charlie Shedd | Doubleday |
| 4. <i>The Fulfilled Woman</i> | Beardsley and Spry | Harvest House |
| 5. <i>Discovering the Intimate Marriage</i> | R. C. Sproul | Bethany Fellowship |
| 6. <i>Balancing Your Marriage</i> | Henry Brandt | Scripture Press |
| 7. <i>1 + 1</i> | Tim Timmons | Canon Press |
| 8. <i>Maximum Marriage</i> | Tim Timmons | Fleming H. Revell |
| 9. <i>A Christian View of Birth Control</i> | Clyde Narramore | Zondervan |
| 10. <i>Happiness in Marriage</i> | Clyde Narramore | <i>ibid.</i> |
| 11. <i>This Way to Happiness</i> | Clyde Narramore | <i>ibid.</i> |
| 12. <i>How to Tell Your Children About Sex</i> | Clyde Narramore | <i>ibid.</i> |
| 13. <i>What Wives Wish Their Husbands Knew About Women</i> | James Dobson | Tyndale House |
| 14. <i>Dare to Discipline</i> | James Dobson | <i>ibid.</i> |
| 15. <i>The Total Woman</i> | Marabel Morgan | Pocketbooks |
| 16. <i>Help! I'm a Parent</i> | Bruce Narramore | Narramore Christian Bookstore |

While the writer does not agree with everything in these books, he does feel that each one has much to contribute to the betterment of your marriage and home. They have been a real blessing to my life, and real help in writing this booklet.

"Good Christian books are like good meals. They strengthen and enlarge the inner man."

A List of Christian Books to Read This Year

| No. | Title | Author | Year |
|-----|---------------------------------|-------------|------|
| 1 | The Bible | Scripture | 1900 |
| 2 | The Christian's Life | John Wesley | 1739 |
| 3 | The Christian's Duty | John Wesley | 1739 |
| 4 | The Christian's Hope | John Wesley | 1739 |
| 5 | The Christian's Love | John Wesley | 1739 |
| 6 | The Christian's Faith | John Wesley | 1739 |
| 7 | The Christian's Prayer | John Wesley | 1739 |
| 8 | The Christian's Fasting | John Wesley | 1739 |
| 9 | The Christian's Charity | John Wesley | 1739 |
| 10 | The Christian's Zeal | John Wesley | 1739 |
| 11 | The Christian's Patience | John Wesley | 1739 |
| 12 | The Christian's Meekness | John Wesley | 1739 |
| 13 | The Christian's Mildness | John Wesley | 1739 |
| 14 | The Christian's Goodness | John Wesley | 1739 |
| 15 | The Christian's Kindness | John Wesley | 1739 |
| 16 | The Christian's Gentleness | John Wesley | 1739 |
| 17 | The Christian's Self-control | John Wesley | 1739 |
| 18 | The Christian's Temperance | John Wesley | 1739 |
| 19 | The Christian's Sobriety | John Wesley | 1739 |
| 20 | The Christian's Modesty | John Wesley | 1739 |
| 21 | The Christian's Cleanliness | John Wesley | 1739 |
| 22 | The Christian's Order | John Wesley | 1739 |
| 23 | The Christian's Industry | John Wesley | 1739 |
| 24 | The Christian's Diligence | John Wesley | 1739 |
| 25 | The Christian's Perseverance | John Wesley | 1739 |
| 26 | The Christian's Endurance | John Wesley | 1739 |
| 27 | The Christian's Courage | John Wesley | 1739 |
| 28 | The Christian's Fortitude | John Wesley | 1739 |
| 29 | The Christian's Bravery | John Wesley | 1739 |
| 30 | The Christian's Faithfulness | John Wesley | 1739 |
| 31 | The Christian's Reliability | John Wesley | 1739 |
| 32 | The Christian's Trustworthiness | John Wesley | 1739 |
| 33 | The Christian's Honesty | John Wesley | 1739 |
| 34 | The Christian's Integrity | John Wesley | 1739 |
| 35 | The Christian's Sincerity | John Wesley | 1739 |
| 36 | The Christian's Openness | John Wesley | 1739 |
| 37 | The Christian's Transparency | John Wesley | 1739 |
| 38 | The Christian's Accountability | John Wesley | 1739 |
| 39 | The Christian's Responsibility | John Wesley | 1739 |
| 40 | The Christian's Commitment | John Wesley | 1739 |
| 41 | The Christian's Dedication | John Wesley | 1739 |
| 42 | The Christian's Devotion | John Wesley | 1739 |
| 43 | The Christian's Piety | John Wesley | 1739 |
| 44 | The Christian's Godliness | John Wesley | 1739 |
| 45 | The Christian's Righteousness | John Wesley | 1739 |
| 46 | The Christian's Holiness | John Wesley | 1739 |
| 47 | The Christian's Sanctification | John Wesley | 1739 |
| 48 | The Christian's Renewal | John Wesley | 1739 |
| 49 | The Christian's Transformation | John Wesley | 1739 |
| 50 | The Christian's Restoration | John Wesley | 1739 |

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tions. Accept her feminine differences, not as weaknesses to be corrected but as assets to your marriage. Most women feel that sex has a less important role in marriage than men do. A wife needs other satisfactions and expressions of love, little marks of affection men often overlook. She needs time to build toward love making. Similarly, she resents being labeled as cold and unloving. Most Christian wives, I believe, want to be good marriage partners. They want to fulfill their husbands' needs and have their needs fulfilled. A wife needs the assurance that her husband understands her. This marriage business is a twenty-four-hour-a-day, eyeball-to-eyeball, cheek-to-cheek, body-to-body relationship. Husband, make your wife happy; make that your GOAL! Hopefully, she in turn will have as her goal making you happy. Now when a couple have selected these goals in sincerity, they have hit on a real winner!

2. *A Woman Wants a Husband Who Is Mature*

Maturity is not a matter of age only. Mature husbands admit their limitations. Moreover, no husband needs to feel inferior because he can't do certain things. As Mark Twain once said: "We are all ignorant, just on different subjects."

The mature husband and wife will learn to evaluate their strengths and weaknesses. Marriage is an honest sharing of opinions and obligations by intelligent, loving people. Some feel that if they got married it would solve their problems. It wouldn't! More likely, marriage magnifies one's problems because now someone else has to live with them. Even if you feel you entered marriage wrongly, God is still ready to help you work out your problems. It doesn't take the minister long to say, "I now pronounce you husband and wife," but joining of two together in a practical way takes some real effort and time. It doesn't just happen. It's an achievement—something you have to build together.

Generally speaking, people are not trained to be marriage partners and parents when they marry. These skills have to be learned, and mostly by trial and error. Many approach marriage like they do a game of grab bag. When I was in high school, we used to play the game at parties. Each one brought a disguised gift and placed it in a basket. Sometime during the evening of fun, the basket was passed around and each one took a gift. It appears that some enter marriage about like that. After a few weeks or months, they ask themselves, "What did I get?"

3. *A Woman Wants a Husband Who Communicates*

Good communication involves listening as well as talking, but not at the same time. A woman wants to know what goes on in her husband's circle and wants him to know what goes on in her own little world that often seems to her, at least, restricted. Husband and wife must learn to talk about everything and be totally honest with each other. "One flesh" doesn't mean physical union only—it does mean that, of course—but I believe it involves the total person. Certainly, good communication is essential to achieve oneness. Communication is the key to understanding, and a lack of it or wrong communication leads to misunderstanding, suspicion, quarreling, divorce, or just a miserable marriage. By the way, avoid explosive words like "always" and "never." When persons use them, they nearly always exaggerate.

Often it's hard to put feelings into words and do it calmly. We react to criticism from someone we love and whom we thought loved us. Consequently, we often respond in anger or stony silence. It's a good practice not to shout at your marriage

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