

MARRIAGE

**GOD'S WONDERFUL WAY OF LIFE
COMPILATION
BOOK 5**

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MARRIAGE

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MARRIAGE

INTRODUCTION

“Marriage is the most rewarding, and the most difficult relationship known to man. It began when the Lord God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make a helper fit for him.” So wrote Cecil Osborne in the opening of his tremendous book “The Art of Understanding Your Mate”. Marriage is the most intimate relationship there is.

Marriage is designed by God to be the ultimate friendship but marriage is much more than just friendship. The romantic and sexual side of friendship adds a whole new dimension to this kind of relationship which we will explore along with what makes marriages work and what makes them fail.

I, myself, am still single as I write this and so I have no practical experience from being married. My practical experience is limited to the friendships I have developed over the years with their various joys and trials. As marriage is part friendship I could say that I have practical experience with those aspects of marriage relationships that are common to all relationships.

For the other aspects of marriage I have to rely on the wisdom of others who have been married themselves. This is what I plan to do here. The vast majority of what I cover here will be from the collective wisdom of those who have been married and have great experience with the joys and trials of marriage.

First of all, we will look at the purpose of marriage and the family. Why did God create marriage and family life in the first place? After that we will look at how to prepare for marriage and make sure you have chosen the right person.

From there we will look in detail at ten important principles that will help make your marriage work. After that we will look at the pitfalls of marriage and why many marriages fail and in the concluding sections we will look at Cecil Osborne’s Ten Commandments of marriage to husbands and wives and Dr Bacchiochi’s Ten Commandments of the Marriage Covenant.

WHY THE FAMILY?

To begin with, now, I’d like to build a foundation by examining the purposes of why God created marriage and the family. To do that I’d like to quote from Mr Herbert W. Armstrong’s very fine article “Why the Family?” that appeared in the WCG brochure “Love, Marriage and Sex”(p.1-3). Mr Armstrong writes:

Now stop and think for a moment. Why did God ordain the human relationship of MARRIAGE?

Animals reproduce. But animals do not marry! Animals are born with instinct. They need little or no teaching. As soon as a calf is born, it will begin to stagger to its feet, while the cow just stands waiting. She does not need to teach her calf how to walk, how to take its food, how to do anything. A little wobbly and unsteady the first minutes, the calf is soon up and walking.

But with humans all this is different. The newborn human does not get up and walk immediately to its food. The tiny baby is helpless. It has mind—but at birth there is NO KNOWLEDGE as yet in its mind. It must be taught! It needs parents to teach it! It matures so very much more slowly than other creatures! Yet its potentiality is infinitely higher! And for this higher purpose, parental guidance and FAMILY LIFE are NECESSARY!

God made cattle "according to its kind." He made "every winged bird according to its kind." But he made MAN after the God kind!

Now, incredible as it may sound to those who do not UNDERSTAND the revelation of God's TRUTH—and only an infinitesimal minority do—GOD is a FAMILY!

Let me make this most wonderful truth of all time PLAIN! First, go back once again to the very first words in God's revelation of knowledge to us: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."

God inspired Moses to write those words in Hebrew, not in the English words above. The Hebrew name here translated "God" is Elohim. It is a plural form used with a singular meaning, rather like the English words family, group and team. One family, but composed of more than one person. One group, but unless composed of more than one person, it would not be a group. One athletic team, composed of two or more players besides a number of substitutes. Almost no one today knows that God is, actually, a divine FAMILY. One family. That family is ONE GOD.

A clever Satan has deceived people into almost every other belief imaginable about God. Most have been deceived into believing God is only THREE persons—LIMITING God to three persons and misrepresenting the Holy Spirit, which flows from God and from Christ, to be a person. Others think of God as ONE PERSON ONLY.

But notice, again, in the New Testament, John 1:1-5, 14: "In the beginning was the Word." Sounds similar to Genesis 1:1, doesn't it? In Genesis 1:1, it is "In the beginning GOD...," meaning more than one person forming ONE God. In John 1, the English word Word is translated from the original Greek word logos, which means "word," "spokesman," "revelatory thought," as a being or person.

The next words in John 1 are "...and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made" (verses 1-3, Revised Authorized Version).

This "Logos" was a separate personage. He existed "from the beginning" the same as God. He ALWAYS self-existed. He existed with God. And he, also, was God. They both coexisted forever. "All things" (words elsewhere translated "the universe") were made by him—the Word—the divine Spokesman.

But now notice verse 14: "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." This, of course, is speaking of Jesus Christ. In the human flesh, he was begotten of God the Father, the only one ever so begotten before human birth. At the time of this begetting and human birth "the Word" became the Son of God.

The Father, from heaven, said of Jesus, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matt.17:5). Jesus, praying, called God "Father"—Father and Son, a FAMILY relationship. The Church, at the resurrection to immortal SPIRIT life, is to MARRY the resurrected and glorified Christ (Eph. 5:25-28). So we have here a FAMILY relationship father, son, husband and wife. And the wife is to be composed of born children of God.

In MAN, God is reproducing himself. Man has the supreme potentiality of being actually born into the divine God family!

Do you realize what that means? Of course, God is composed of immortal SPIRIT. Man, like animals, is composed in this life of material FLESH—matter! But the transcendent essential factor is that God is PERFECT SPIRITUAL CHARACTER! It is the supreme intelligence, combined with holy and righteous CHARACTER OF MIND, that most importantly distinguishes God from every other living creature. No animal has this potential, but it is the true destiny of MAN. Of course God, too, possesses supreme, ALMIGHTY POWER. But without right CHARACTER, this power would be destructive and dangerous!

What Is This Righteous Spiritual Character?

It is that controlled ability, in a separate independent entity, to come to a knowledge of the true and right from the false and, further, to use the self-discipline to will and to actually DO the right. And how do you define right? By the spiritual law of God!

This necessitates that each individual human be an independent entity, with a mind of his or her own—with freedom of choice (free moral agency). It requires MIND to absorb KNOWLEDGE, to reason, to think, to plan, to devise, to draw conclusions, to will and to act.

Inanimate objects have no mind, make no decisions, have no character. Animals have instinct, but they do not possess human-level consciousness of self, do not absorb knowledge from which to reason abstractly. Animals do not create, question or decide whether to obey moral codes.

Humans are born with MINDS. Humans must be taught and learn. The human mind can absorb knowledge and reason from it— think creatively, formulate plans, make decisions, render judgments and exercise self-discipline.

Man has the capacity to develop righteous CHARACTER. This character is not created instantaneously. It develops through experience, and experience requires TIME. A human baby is born without knowledge, but with capacity for acquiring it and of developing righteous CHARACTER. The human has the supreme potential of receiving God's own HOLY SPIRIT that imparts the divine nature, to equip the MIND to comprehend revealed spiritual knowledge!

Human babies—born helpless—need the tender care, the loving instruction, the patient training and discipline and the warm affection and love of a mother and father. They need the warmth and protection and security of family and of home life. And they are of supreme importance—for they are the potential HEIRS of God!

Animals have never been given FAMILY relationship as humans experience it. Angels have never enjoyed FAMILY status.

The family relationship is a God-PLANE relationship—not an angel-plane relationship. And God bestowed it on MAN! Because MAN is to be born INTO THE GOD FAMILY.

Why Marriage?

Of all life forms—whether plant, animal or angel—in all God's creation, MAN ALONE was created for MARRIAGE—for HOME and FAMILY LIFE!

Man is, now, composed of matter. Yet in man, and in MAN ONLY, is God's CREATION still going on! Humans, by repentance, surrender to God and acceptance of Christ, may be in mind and attitude converted—may receive God's Holy Spirit. Thus, they are actually begotten as God's children. They may have direct contact with God and call him FATHER! They are brought into a FATHER-AND-SON relationship with God!

This is possible for no other creature—not even angels! Angels were not, never can be, begotten and BORN of God! Each angel is a separate creation. No angel can ever become a part of the DIVINE FAMILY OR KINGDOM OF GOD!

Notice! God says: "For to which of the angels did He ever say: 'You are My Son, today I have begotten You'? And again: 'I will be to Him a Father, and He shall be to Me a Son'?" (Heb. 1:5).

Neither animal, nor angel, nor any other being, except MAN, can be literally begotten by spiritual reproductive process, and then actually BORN into the divine GOD FAMILY!

Humans are, if converted through Jesus Christ, the heirs of the GOD FAMILY. They are to enter the divine FAMILY. They are, even now, the begotten children of God. Therefore God ordained the family relationship for human beings.

Family Relationships Demand MARRIAGES!

The FAMILY relationship demands the HUSBAND-AND-WIFE relationship! And that demands MARRIAGE and faithfulness to that matrimonial bond! The CHURCH of God is merely that BODY composed of the begotten children of God. And the church, as a BODY, is the affianced BRIDE OF CHRIST, to MARRY Christ at the time of the resurrection and his Second Coming!

Now UNDERSTAND! The husband-and-wife relationship, and the family relationship, are God-plane relationships!

Since humans were put on earth for the very PURPOSE of being begotten, and then BORN into the God FAMILY—which is the KINGDOM OF GOD—the ETERNAL has endowed this GOD-PLANE relationship for HUMANS and for humans only! What a

wonderful privilege to be humans—to be given the marriage relationship now, to marry Christ and become part of the God family!

The Affianced Bride

Here is another reason for the institution of marriage in the human family. It is to teach us—to constantly remind us—of our sacred relationship to Jesus Christ!

Here is the vital teaching: "Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything.

"Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for it, that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word [the Word, if obeyed, washes away error], that He might present it to Himself a glorious church [glorified, deified], not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish.

"So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies...For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.' This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church" (Eph. 5:22-28, 30-32).

Notice! For this reason—because of the coming marriage (spiritually) between Christ and the church—because the church is, now, the affianced bride, engaged to marry Christ—FOR THIS REASON, God ordained the MARRIAGE institution for humans! But not for animals! Not for angels!

Notice Revelation 19:7, speaking of the Second Coming of Christ in glory: "...the marriage of the Lamb [Christ] has come, and His wife has made herself ready." Only those made ready in righteous character will be presented to him then!

Why Home and Family?

So, in addition to the family relationship, there is also the divine marriage relationship. So understand! The husband and wife relationship and the family relationship are God-plane relationships!

Humans are free moral agents. God never forces one to be truly converted—to become his very begotten son. Yet the purpose God is working out here below is to reproduce himself—to bring, through Christ, "many sons to glory" (Heb. 2: 10) in the divine KINGDOM OF GOD!

Since humans were put on earth for the very purpose of being begotten, and then born into the God family, the Eternal has endowed this God-plane family status for humans, now—and for humans only!

What a wonderful privilege to be given the MARRIAGE and FAMILY relationships that we may be prepared for the spiritual marriage to CHRIST and the divine family status, for eternity, in THE KINGDOM OF GOD!"

RIGHT AND WRONG REASONS FOR MARRYING

Darien Cooper in her book "How to Be Happy Though Young" gives us these helpful insights on why and why not to get married:

Choosing your lifetime partner is one of the three most important decisions of your life... [The other two decisions are baptism and choosing a career.] God has planned the marriage relationship to be the most enjoyable relationship between two human beings this side of heaven. It's like having a little bit of heaven on earth if you make the right choice and base your marriage on biblical principles. But, if you marry the wrong person and violate scriptural truths, you are in for a little bit of hell on earth.

Satan knows that the home is the foundation of society and the means of blessing the human race. If he can break down this relationship, all else will fall apart. From there we will have frustrated men and women, divorces, broken families, homosexuality and juvenile delinquency...In order to keep from marrying the wrong person and missing the happiness God has waiting for you, let's consider some wrong reasons for marrying.

1) Do not as a believer marry an unbeliever. "Be not yoked unequally with unbelievers; for what common ground is there between righteousness and lawlessness, or what association is there between light and darkness?"(2 Cor. 6:14). God gives an illustration of being unequally yoked in Deuteronomy 22:10. This agricultural example points out how a donkey and an ox do not make a good team. The size, weight, speed, gait, disposition and whole nature of a donkey is different than an ox. They could never plow together smoothly. The same is true for an unbeliever and a believer becoming a team in marriage. Their goals and purposes in life are different and they'll be pulling in opposite directions - a tug of war - instead of going in the same direction. God doesn't want that for you.

2) Don't marry a person controlled by mental attitude sins. Anyone consistently controlled by the old nature is not a good marriage prospect.

3) Do not marry to get away from a bad home situation.

4) Do not marry because of social pressure. Such reasons as, all my friends are getting married, I don't want to be left out; this may be my last chance or I'm pregnant are not good enough reasons for getting married.

5) Do not marry for money or status.

6) Do not marry a teenager or when you're a teenager. Most teenagers are not mature enough to assume the responsibilities necessary to make a marriage work. Statistics show that two-thirds of all teenage marriages end in divorce sometime in the first 5 years. Teenage marriages are 2 to 3 times more likely to occur than those in their twenties. The traits that turn you on at 16 to 19 years of age, may be quite different to those you'd want when you are 25 years old.

7) Do not marry after a recent heartache. If you have just received a Dear John letter, recently been divorced or lost a mate as a result of a death you should wait until the emotional wounds have healed before considering marriage. After such a great disappointment, it's easy to mistake sympathy and understanding for love. Wait until you can be objective, six months to a year, before you make such a major decision as marriage.

8) Don't consider marrying a divorced person [until they have evaluated their mistakes in the last marriage and corrected them.]... Unless he[or she] does, his[or her] problems will be doubled in the new marriage. They will carry past unresolved problems into the new relationship plus the problems created from any new association.

9) Do not marry a person who is addicted to alcohol, drugs or gambling. The need for such props as marriage is a sign of deep insecurity and immaturity and spells trouble to all involved.

10) Do not marry a person because they need you. Such reasons as he needs me, I feel sorry for him, I can reform him or she will commit suicide if I leave her are never good reasons for marriage.

11) Don't marry for sex... [The sexual drive can be extremely powerful and especially difficult for teens experiencing it for the first time. As sex is only allowable in marriage it can be very tempting to marry the first person who shows sexual attraction for you.]

12) Do not marry only because you have fallen in love. [Just because you're mutually attracted to someone doesn't mean you have sufficient in common with each other or the depth of communication or the spiritual maturity to get married.]...(p.193-196)

Here are some points that will help you recognize your lifetime partner.

1) You have grown to love this special one. You have spent time with your intended learning how he acts in different situations. His[or her] hopes, dreams, standards and values are the same as yours; therefore you are willing to commit yourself [to his or her needs after carefully looking ahead for the rest of your life.]

2) You have common bonds of faith... [You share a similar, strong common interest in the church and it's teachings and a passion for God and His way of life.]

3) You will be compatible. Being compatible does not mean that you will be carbon copies of each other...[You have sufficient common interests and your differences should complement and not clash with each other.] Mentally you should be compatible. You wouldn't have much to share with each other if one holds a Ph.D. and the other the most basic elementary education. This does not mean you both must have the same educational background but the differences should not cause a gap in your relationship.

Interest compatibility is important. If one adores the outdoors and the other breaks out in a rash at the sight of a leaf, there are sure to be conflicts. However such things as recreational interest and the type of art or music one appreciates can be learned with a little effort on each other's part. Cultural compatibility should be carefully considered. Do you come from backgrounds that have the same basic ideas and values? Will the socio-economic adjustment be too difficult to make? A young girl reared in a wealthy home frequently finds it difficult to adjust if her young man cannot support her in the manner to which she has been accustomed.

There should be racial compatibility. Differences in race may present serious hindrances to a marriage. When those from different races marry, an additional burden of unacceptance by society is often placed upon both partners and eventually on their children. Many marriages can't survive such pressures.

[4] You will appreciate your loved one's appearance... Those big ears or the freckles will not detract from the loveliness of your loved one in your eyes. You love your loved ones looks such that you know in your heart that you will always be enraptured in her looks for life even as time ages you both. Your desire will be to please only your prospective mate. Another's wink or flattering words will no longer have the same meaning to you.

[5] You will be willing to accept your right one as he [or she] is. Everyone has faults. Objectively analyze your prospective mates weaknesses to see if you are willing to accept and live with them for the rest of your life. Patterns of behaviour, character traits and attitudes a person has before marriage will continue after marriage. Instead of thinking, "I'll change him after we are married, "It's more realistic to ask if I could love and live him if they became twice as bad?"

Love and marriage demand that each accept the other just as they is. Taking away one's freedom to make his or her own decisions takes away a God-given right. One must have this acceptance to remain an individual, free, within limits, to grow and develop toward self-fulfillment...You will respect your loved one's beliefs, rights and needs. You will respect that person as a total person. Looking to him or her for guidance and encouragement will be natural because you respect his values and standards. Applauding the other's good points will be a pleasure.

[6] You have passed the test of separation and time. Infatuation wears off with separation and time but love grows stronger. Often in biblical times, if a man wanted to marry a woman, he announced his intentions to do so then left for a year to raise money for his future home. At the end of the year, if he still felt the same way about her and she him they invited over all their friends and relatives and made it formal and permanent. After a long party, they simply lived together as man and wife. I'm not suggesting you separate from each other for a year but the separation and time test will show you if your love is genuine and deep or only a feeling of attraction that may pass when you see someone who looks prettier or nicer.

[7] You have your parent's approval. Don't panic at the thought of this checkout point. Remember God often leads us through our parents. If your parents object to the one you are dating don't blow up but ask them to point out their objections. Should they come up with good, firm evidence you'd better evaluate it closely...

[8] The final and most important criteria for recognizing your lifetime partner is a deep, inner assurance provided by God that this is the one. If there is no unconfessed sin and you are regularly feeding on God's word you can trust Him to give you peace about the one you are to marry. Colossians 3:15 describes this peace. "Let the peace of Christ, to which you were called as one body, be in your hearts to decide things for you. And be thankful." If there are nagging doubts, back off! Give God time to confirm your doubts or totally remove them(p.199-205).

Gavin Read in his book "Starting Out Together" has the following advice for those considering marriage:

Here are eight questions that every couple thinking about getting married ought to ask themselves.

1. How long have I known him/her? Lightning love affairs with people being swept off their feet don't always end up as happy marriages. It usually takes a good deal of time to get to know another person really well. Why rush? We don't learn about each other curled up on the sofa - surprising though this may sound. We learn about each other by going to places together, meeting each other's friends, talking over what we believe about life and what we want out of marriage. All this takes time - and time is what young people have in plenty!

2. Am I old enough to know what I want for the rest of my life? People's bodies mature long before their characters are fully developed and their emotions have settled. It is a sad fact that one in three of all marriages entered into by people under twenty-one ends in divorce. Those in that age group need to be doubly sure before fixing the big day.

3. Am I marrying him/her because I want to be with him/her - or because I want to get away from someone else? Not all of us are fortunate enough to come from happy homes or to live in pleasant circumstances. But this should never make us rush into marriage as a way of escape. It is a very hurtful thing for someone to learn that he or she was married only as a means to an end. To marry someone is to say that you want to share that person's life. No other reason is good enough.

4. Am I marrying him/her for what he/she is or am I hoping to be able to change him/her in the future? This is an important question which comes right back to whether we love people for what they are in themselves or whether we have a dream person in mind and hope to change our partners to be more like our dreams. Real love - the sort that comes from God himself - accepts us for what we are. Married people need to know that even if they do not change much over the years (and most of us do) they will still be loved.

Sometimes I meet the ambitious wife who tries to push her husband into 'bettering himself'. It rarely works unless the husband wants to do this in any case. I have seen this bring friction and unhappiness into a marriage.

5. Are we agreed about the standard of living we expect after marriages? This is another area that can lead to discontent. The husband is content with a simple lifestyle. He maintains an old car and has little interest in the latest fashions. And all the time the wife wishes that they were keeping up with the Joneses with a bigger house, new car and all the rest. Of course it can be the other way around with the husband becoming a 'high flyer' and wishing his wife would stop settling for being tied to housework.

Now there are bigger questions of right and wrong selfishness and materialism here, but my concern for the moment is simply to point out that trouble looms ahead for the couple that haven't agreed in advance the sort of lifestyle they hope to achieve as husband and wife.

6. Are we agreed about having a family and the number of children (ideally) we would like? I have met people who didn't discover until after marriage that their partners didn't want children! This sort of thing can lead to great bitterness. As with the previous question there are moral issues at stake, but again my point here is the need for the engaged couple to have an agreed picture of the sort of home and family they would like to see in the days ahead.

7. Am I marrying a FRIEND? This may seem an odd question but I believe it is the key to a successful marriage. I would go so far as to say that many couples who get married don't have a particularly deep friendship.

With current thinking stressing the sexual side of life so greatly, simple friendship between the sexes can get forgotten. The impression can be given that we look for people whose looks bowl us over or make us go wobblykneed. But this is to reduce human beings to dolls if not to sex-objects.

Of course it doesn't help if we find the other person sexually repulsive, but this is hardly likely! What is important (and I hear too few people saying this) is that we see marriage as lifelong friendship. Most of our married lives are spent out of bed. We are going to grow old and less physically attractive - all of us. To be married successfully calls for trust, interest in each other's affairs, some common interests (although it is good to be able to 'do our own thing' also) and enjoyment of each other's conversation. Very often marriage degenerates to a housekeeping and sex arrangement with the partners living in two different worlds. The husband who looks to 'nights out with the boys' for his fun and to his wife for bed, breakfast and clean shirts is heading for trouble. He will deserve it!

8. Are we agreed about God? This may be my last question but it is not an afterthought. I believe it is the most important question of all. To have discovered that Jesus Christ is a living person and that we have a caring heavenly Father, makes us different people. A couple can have different views about football and different views about politics and still get along together well. But if one is a committed Christian and the other has no basic sympathy with Christian belief then something that is very precious to one cannot be shared with the other.

And Christianity is far more than head belief. It is a whole way of life. It affects our understanding of true and false, good and bad. I have seen many marriages divided over Christianity, usually because one of the partners became a Christian after marriage. It can be such a strain that there is no way I could commend deliberately setting out on married life with this difference between a couple. In the very early days of Christianity Paul gave advice to any Christian woman who had been widowed. 'She is free to be married to any man she wishes,' he wrote. 'But only if he is a Christian.' It seems a harsh teaching but it comes from a concern that people find real togetherness in marriage. It has nothing to do with Christian thinking of themselves as 'superior' in any way...

There are problems that can become niggles and sadnesses later on if they are not talked through before marriage.

Two such problems come to mind. The first is: What church will we join as a married couple? It surely is out of the question to think of splitting up for worship[services]... Again it can never be ideal to flit around between two churches all the time. A church is far more than a place you attend. It is a family and every Christian should belong to a local church family and take a full part in its life. There needs to be agreement about this and one of the partners has got to give a little. This does not mean that an occasional visit to services of the other denomination (by both) would not be a good thing.

The second problem is the upbringing of children. [What church will they attend? What doctrines will they be taught? And what values will they be taught? The

potential for conflict here on the issue of religion can be quite serious. That is why God commands to marry someone else who is also in the church.](p.18-22)

Josh McDowell makes the following comments on right and wrong reasons to marry someone in his excellent book "The Secret of Loving":

You don't marry a body; you marry a person. Physical attraction certainly plays an important role in loving a person totally, yet for a mature love to grow, the physical attraction must not overshadow or make up for another aspect of the person. Ask yourself this question: Could we enjoy spending an evening together without any physical contact whatsoever? If you wouldn't truly enjoy it, your love isn't mature.

I also like to challenge people to the 'thirty day love test,' to see if they make it that long without even holding hands and still enjoy each other. Most people boast at the beginning that they will have no problem doing the test, but have to face reality after a couple of days when frustration and irritation set in. So many couples have confessed to me that it was the 'thirty day test' which showed them the narrow focus of their 'love'. They had to face the unpleasant fact that they were not in love, just physically attracted...

Focusing a relationship on one aspect of the individual can take many forms. Some will base their love for another on the ability to enjoy each other socially. As one divorcee shared with me, 'We got along so well together and had such a fun time dating that it seemed like love.' It is not unusual for a couple to think that since they enjoy each other's company so much, they must be in love. Well, you can have a hilariously good time with a chimpanzee, but that doesn't mean you should marry one! The trouble with this type of relationship is that when problems and frustrations set in, it takes more than having fun together to deal with them.

Still others base their relationship on finances. As one young man complained to his fiancée, 'I thought you said there was something about me you liked.' She replied, 'There was, but you spent it all.'

Dr. Howard Hendricks makes the acute observation that 'in a proper love relationship you enrich the totality of the other person's life.' In this kind of relationship a person who has been married twenty or forty years is still excited about his wife, much more so than on the first night of his honeymoon. Why? Because he didn't marry a body. If he had, that would have burned out a long, long time ago. He married a person, and every year that goes by, the person becomes enriched. Therefore, his relationship is enriched.

Think of the poor guy who marries a girl only as a body, but after he's married to her a while, he discovers that she has a beautiful body, but she's a dunce. He can't even converse with her. Spiritually, she's an infant and could care less. Socially, she's a handicapped person.

He realises that he really got a bad bargain, no matter how attractive she may have been at the beginning. What a difference to find a person who is attractive in every area. She may not be particularly attractive to someone else, but to you she is extremely lovely.

The disastrous results of many marriages often come about because the relationship is not based on a total response to a total person. Without this total response, love is immature and incomplete...

We need to take care, though, to separate the person from his or her activities. My wife doesn't love me because I am a speaker and author. She helps me in what I do, but she loves me for who I am. A man shouldn't marry a woman because she is a great cook, or a woman marry a man because he provides her with important social contacts. 'A marriage is a commitment of two people not to exchange products or services but to escape the psychology of exchange altogether. Each partner receives the other as a whole person, for what he is rather than for what he agrees to do'"(The Secret of Loving, p.249-252)...

Joy in Being Together

One of the greatest tests of love is whether there is pain in being separated from the one loved, and an increase in joy when in that person's presence. Mature love exhibits a tremendous joy in the presence of the other person, and a longing to be together when apart.

I was at Virginia Polytechnical Institute on a Tuesday when a young man came to me for counsel. He was a graduate student there, and his fiancée worked on the staff of another university. He shared with me that they were to be married the following Saturday. But, he explained, 'We have already called the wedding off twice—once the week before. My problem is that I really don't know if I love her.'

As shaken as this young man was, I could see that his problem was not just a case of premarital jitters. And I was amazed that he hadn't figured out months earlier whether or not he loved her. So, I asked him, 'Have you ever had a long lost weekend?' He didn't understand, so I explained.

Thanksgiving is a good example of a 'long lost weekend' when you can visit her, or she can visit you, for about four days—from Wednesday until Sunday. I call it a long lost weekend because you have no recollection of anything that may have happened in the news."

'We've had lots of those weekends,' he said.

'OK,' I continued, 'now, I want to determine what your attitude is like on those weekends.

Let me paint for you two scenarios, and we'll see which one best describes you.

The first is that two or three weeks before Thanksgiving you begin counting the days, the hours, and even the minutes until you can be together. It's Wednesday evening and you're done with school, or you just got off work and you can hardly wait to get there! You jump in your car and take off. (About the only time I ever got speeding tickets was on my way to see Dottie when we were dating.)

You finally arrive, get a big hug and you feel like you're on top of the world! Thursday and Friday come and go and when Saturday rolls around you don't even want to think about Sunday, because you know that's when you will have to leave. You try to block it out of your mind. On Saturday night you don't want to go to bed because you know that when you get up the next day you will have only a few more hours together. On

Sunday you really stretch the hours, but the time just flies. And when you say good-bye, you feel like you are leaving a part of yourself behind.

Does that sound familiar? Or does this second scenario fit you better?

You arrive on Wednesday night and everything is great. Thursday and Friday are tremendous. You are having a wonderful time. When Saturday rolls around you are looking forward to Sunday, because you know you need a break. On Sunday you don't really mind too much that you have to leave—it's time for a breather."

Then I asked the student, 'Do you look forward to those breathers? Do you feel you need some space?'

He replied, 'For a long time, the first scenario fit me. But I have to admit that in the last six to nine months I have looked forward to those breathers.'

'In that case,' I advised him, 'don't get married. Don't marry someone you can live with. Marry someone you cannot live without. There is a big difference.'"

Mature love rejoices in togetherness, and that joy doesn't diminish after a few days. In fact, it increases so much that you want to block out of your mind the day you have to separate. Don't get married until, for all the right reasons, you don't want Sunday to come around.

This was one of the major differences between my relationship with Dottie and my relationship with Paula. Paula and I thought we were in love, and those weekends we spent together were fun, but when Sunday came around, I didn't really mind. I was looking forward to a break.

It was different when I dated Dottie. When Thursday came around, I didn't want to think about Friday. On Friday I didn't want Saturday to come, because that was the day before I would have to leave. On Saturday I thought of every possible excuse to stay. When Sunday came, I didn't even set the alarm, thinking if I slept in I wouldn't have to leave.

I remember our first 'long lost weekend' at the home of a friend in Houston. On Sunday, she had to fly Braniff to Austin, and I had to go on to a conference in Chicago. As I drove her to the airport, I prayed that Braniff would be late. We stood in the lobby and I kissed her good-bye, and as she walked down the corridor and disappeared into the plane, it was all I could do to hold myself back from running after her and saying, 'Don't leave!'

In all the times we were together, joy in the presence of the other increased, and even when we are apart today, there is a longing to be together. By the grace of God, I could live without Dottie, but to be honest, I sure wouldn't want to. I think that is a sign of mature love.

Walter Trobisch, in his sensitive book 'I Loved a Girl', says you are in love 'if you cannot imagine living your life without her; if you feel pain when you are away from her; if she occupies your thoughts, and inspires your dreams at all times; if her happiness means more to you than your own.'"

Marriage and family counselor Dr. Henry Brandt writes that love is mature when a couple 'enjoys being together more than being with anyone else,

although others are not excluded from their lives. They discover that each can even have a good time doing something together which neither would enjoy doing alone. When they are absent from each other, each is in the background of the other's thoughts.' The old cliché, 'Absence makes the heart grow fonder,' is more indicative of mature love than most people realize."...(The Secret of Loving, p.279-283)

Being Realistic

It may be true that marriages are made in heaven but they are lived out here on earth between imperfect people. When love is mature it takes this into account and is realistic in its expectations. If your love for someone is mature, you will love and accept that person just as he or she is—shortcomings and all—and not for what you hope he or she will become.

This kind of mature love, however, always encounters several barriers to seeing an individual or a relationship realistically.

Idealistic fantasies about our marriage and mate is the first barrier usually encountered. 'The most dangerous person to marry,' writes Evelyn Duvall, 'is your ideal—dangerous because you are likely to overlook the presence of disqualifying defects or the absence of character essentials.'

Someone has said that marriage will cut your sorrows in half, double your joy, and could well triple your expenses. In his zeal for marriage, however, the man who thinks he has found his ideal may find it easy to excuse her shortcomings. The woman who approaches a relationship wearing rose-colored glasses will have a distorted view of the man she marries. This always forms a barrier to experiencing a true and mature love.

Author Charles Swindoll touches on reality in relationships when he observes, "There is no such thing as a home completely without conflicts. The last couple to live 'happily ever after' was Snow White and Prince Charming. Even though you are committed to your mate, there will still be times of tension, tears, struggle, disagreement, and impatience. Commitment doesn't erase our humanity!" That's bad news, but it's realistic.

When one falls in love with a fantasy or idealised image, one of two results is usually forthcoming: Either the spouse is rejected for not measuring up to the image, or a concerted effort is made to change him or her into that image.

A desire for constant feelings and passions is a second obstacle to realistic love. Mature love is not just a strong feeling. It is a commitment, a promise, a pledge. Feelings will come and go, but love remains constant. Don't become confused if you're not always bubbly with feelings of love, and don't give up on the relationship the first time either of you thinks the feelings are cooling off. Realistic love is prepared for those times and uses them to strengthen, rather than to weaken the relationship.

My mate will fulfill all my needs all of the time is a third barrier to realism in love. This commonly held fallacy trips up many a couple. Many people are looking for that certain someone who can understand them fully and give them everything they feel is missing in their lives.

What often happens in such cases is that a man meets a woman who satisfies some of his most acute needs, which he then exaggerates in his mind to encompass all of his needs. He thinks he has found the 'right one' who fulfills his every desire, when in fact he has found someone who happens to fulfill a few key areas of his life. He actually overlooks the needs that have not been satisfied. And what he is really saying to her is, 'I love you only because you take care of needs in my life and you fulfill my expectations.'

One writer put it this way: 'It is probably impossible for any two people to completely fulfill one another's needs. If a pair could mutually satisfy even 80 percent of one another's needs, it would be a minor miracle. The expectation of total need fulfillment within a marriage ruins many marital relationships'(The Secret of Loving, p.286-288).

Alan Loy McGuinness writes the following on that last point about not looking to your partner to fulfill **ALL** your needs and the **NEED** to maintain and develop friends outside of your marriage:

Part of our strategy for strengthening self-esteem, and thus strengthening our love lives, should be to widen our circle of friends. In Samuel Johnson's phrase, to keep our friendships "in good repair." Here again, some of this probably needs to be done independently.

As I said in an earlier book we make a terrible mistake to drop our old friends at the altar and to suppose that our socialising from that point on should be exclusively with other couples. The odds of four people all liking each other equally are not very good, and if your mate does not find much in common with your old friends, that should not halt the friendships. If you happen to find some other couple with whom you are simpatico, that's wonderful, but if not, you should not feel guilty about cultivating friendships on your own that meet your emotional needs and keep you stretching.

I get uneasy when a man says to me, 'My wife is my best friend. I can tell her everything, so I don't need other close friends.' Your mate should be your best friend, but not your only friend. There is no way that any one person can meet all your emotional needs, and to expect your mate to do so is to put undue pressure on the relationship. If you surround yourself with supportive and healthy friendships in which you are stimulated to expand your horizons, you should arrive home from such associations happy. And most of us find it easiest to love when we are happiest"(The Romance Factor, p.101-102)

I wholeheartedly concur with the above statements. As a single, you expect the amount of time your friends spend with you to decrease when they get married. That is only natural but what I've found so often happens is that those friendships almost become non-existent which is a terrible shame. I recall one close female friend of mine who said, after it was done to her a few times, that she would never drop her friendships like that when she got married. Unfortunately when she did get married she did exactly the same thing and our own friendship virtually became non-existent.

Your life is greatly enriched by having a wide variety of different friends who all add something different to your life. Don't cheat yourself from the richness of those friendships by dropping them when you get married. Have the love and concern for your friends, especially your single friends, to keep in touch and care for them.

Together, as a couple, you should have greater confidence to reach out and include and help even more people in the church than your could on your own as a single.

PREPARING FOR MARRIAGE

In Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 we read that two are stronger than one. This is what husbands and wives do for each other. The question you need to ask yourself is what will I bring into marriage? How much is someone going to benefit from being married to me? Will I strengthen someone or weaken them? Let's have a look at some qualities we should be developing and are critical to have in marriage to make it work.

1) Stability. Are you a stable person? How do you handle stress, disappointment, problems or discouragement? Do you give up (Prov. 24:10) or fly off the handle? Do you retreat from reality? Do you sweep problems under the carpet?

The fruit of instability is doublemindedness (Jam.1:8). Are you constantly changing jobs, relationships or places of residence? Are your moods erratic? Do people have to walk on eggshells around you? Try and develop a sense of calmness, consistency and peace of mind. Have a stability of what you plan on doing with your life jobwise and develop stability in your relationships and stability of residence.

2) The ability to communicate. We need the ability to express our thoughts and emotions and the ability to listen to others as well as their thoughts and emotions as they express them. How do I communicate? Can I keep a conversation going? Can I express myself honestly, openly and clearly? Openness requires one to be uninhibited. Are you relaxed with people? Are you opinionated, fixed or inflexible? Many people are.

Can I listen to others and what they have to say and be genuinely interested and really value what they have to say? How much depth and consistency is there in your conversation with that special someone you hope to marry one day? Take that time to build that depth and consistency in your conversation.

3) Financial responsibility. This is one of the most important areas to get right in your lives before you enter marriage. Financial problems are second biggest problem in the church directly after marriage problems. Do you have a career? Is it the best and most enjoyable for your ability? How do you approach spending? Are you constantly spending more than you are making? Are you working on extinguishing any debts, except a mortgage if you have one, before you enter marriage. Try and make that a goal of yours if it isn't already.

Both men and women should be saving for marriage. It shouldn't be just the men who are saving for marriage. The cost of coming up with a deposit for a house and things to put into one is very expensive these days so men themselves not only should be serious about getting something behind them financially but girls also should be working and saving to help out as well. You still have to enjoy yourself while you're young but be careful about not squandering your money while you're young because if you squander it, it can put you back quite a bit towards getting married. If you are impatient you can enter marriage too young and take on a lot more financial pressure than you need to which can put serious pressure on a marriage.

4) Spiritual strength. Both partners need to be spiritually strong. Is your relationship with God the most important thing in your life? How important is the church and God's work to you and to your partner? Do you and your partner have a strong love for talking about God's way of life and what the church teaches? Do you and your partner have a strong love of learning?

5) Humour. A sense of humour is vital. Can I laugh at myself? You should be able to laugh at yourself in marriage. Do I have a sense of fun? Proverbs 15:13 says a merry heart makes a cheerful countenance. Without a sense of fun your relationship will be bland and dry so relax, enjoy yourself and develop your sense of humour.

6) Generosity. A christian should be generous. This is a vital quality in marriage because you are asked to sacrifice a lot for your spouse and kids in marriage. God loves a cheerful giver so learn to get a kick out of giving and become a cheerful giver.

7) Good health. Do I take my health seriously? Bad health will drag the other down. How much do you exercise? Do you eat well? You don't have to go overboard with health but do take care of yourself.

Darien Cooper has these words to say about choosing a lifelong partner that is going to be best for you:

We "grow into love" rather than "fall in love." Growth takes time and so does love. Use God's description of love in 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 (NAS) to evaluate if your love and that of your intended is really true love.

1. Love is patient. Is he patient or does he lose his temper? How does he react when he doesn't get his own way? Does he accept you just the way you are even when you are fun to be with or when you are a drag?

2. Love is kind. Does he recognize your needs? Does he seek ways to help you grow?

3. Love is not jealous. Does he willingly give you free time to grow into a better person apart from him?

4. Love does not brag. Does he parade himself or his accomplishments in front others to gain applause for himself?

5. Love is not arrogant. Does he feel superior to others and indifferent to others' needs?

6. Love does not act unbecomingly. Does he make fun of others so as to hurt their feelings? Does he show poor manners such as interrupting others while they are talking?
7. Love does not seek its own. Does he seek to satisfy his sexual appetite or is he concerned about caring for your welfare? Does he seek to please his parents or do his own thing?
8. Love is not provoked. Does he have a thankful spirit when things go wrong or is he frustrated, irritated, and resentful?
9. Love does not take into account a wrong suffered. Does he practice adding up, remembering, and becoming revengeful when he is wronged?
10. Love does not rejoice in unrighteousness. Does he excuse his mistakes by saying, "Everyone's doing it" or "I can't help being as I am"? Does he run others down to try to make himself look good?
11. Love rejoices in the truth. Is he in active fellowship with dedicated Christians? Is he glad when spiritual qualities are demonstrated in others' lives?
12. Love bears all things. Is he tolerant of others' inconsistencies? Does he show compassion for others when they have problems?
13. Love believes all things. Does he believe in you without question?
14. Love hopes all things. Is he willing to put you and his future in God's hands?
15. Love endures all things. Does he love you even in the face of unreturned love?

After reading God's description of love, you may feel as I do, "Wow, I could never be that perfect." And you would be right. None of us can be that way in our own strength. Such love is a fruit of the Spirit and can be manifested in our lives only when we are controlled by the Holy Spirit.

The issue is: Are you and your special one cooperating with God as He develops these characteristics in your lives? Take time to really get to know your prospective mate to see if these qualities are being developed in him. Examine yourself to see if you are ready to love another like this. That is to give of yourself so that your right one's needs may be met (p.198-199).

The following is from an article by Gary Antion entitled, "Before You Say I Do" that appeared in the WCG brochure "Love, Marriage and Sex"(p.7-9) in which he gives young people some pre-marital counsel:

Before You Say I Do

"I now pronounce you husband and wife". Those words are like music to the ears of couples anxious to begin life together as a new family. It is their big moment—one of the most important moments of their lives. They are now joined as husband and wife.

What leads people to this point? How do they prepare? What should we know in anticipation of that future time when marriage will come to us or our loved ones?

Be Prepared

As we grow up we may move in and out of "love" abruptly. We begin to notice the opposite sex. And the more we notice, the more care we give to our personal grooming and behavior—how we look, how we talk, the kind of impression we leave on others.

Puppy love and infatuation are common. Sometimes the person we "love" doesn't even know he or she is "loved." Once in a while we feel that we have finally found our "true love." When that involvement doesn't work we are crushed. But soon our romantic self has recuperated and is ready for another fling.

It seems that most people go through such stages in growing up. But marriage, the second most important step in one's life (making a commitment to God is first), is not for the immature. It is only for those who are physically, mentally, emotionally, financially and spiritually prepared. Some let physical development be the only indicator of maturity. If a person has reached a certain age, some reason, he or she should be married. Others let physical attraction be the determining factor.

Certainly there must be physical attraction, but what about a person's level of education? Is the thinking mature? There are lovebirds and kissing fish, but to be a proper partner in marriage takes mental maturity in addition to physical maturity.

Emotional people are beautiful—they feel deeply and express themselves effectively. But have they tempered their emotions—brought their emotions under control? If so, great. If not, it will be difficult for them to cope with the changes and adjustments necessary in marriage.

Then there are those who put too much emphasis on money. They seem to think they have to marry millionaires. This is unrealistic and wouldn't work anyway without all the other factors working.

But, then again, it does take adequate finances to run a family. How much do you earn? Do you have a regular job? Is it a career or only a temporary stop in the job market? Proverbs 24:27 tells us to prepare first, and then to build a home and family. So be sure that you are stable financially before assuming the responsibilities of marriage.

The most important factor in preparation for marriage is spiritual maturity. Spiritual maturity on the part of both husband and wife is extremely important to the success of the marriage.

So it all begins with you! Prepare for your future with that special person by making sure you are mature physically, mentally, emotionally, financially and spiritually.

Dating

Dating is an art that is rapidly being lost in societies that have it as a practice. Many people are interested only in what they can get out of a date. A person should be concerned with how he or she may give the other person a nice time.

Dating is a discovery period. We all have ideas about what we want in a mate, and dating helps bring that image into clear focus. Dating widely at first helps a person to narrow the field.

Actually, the more individuals you date before settling on that special one, the better. You will observe good and not-so-good traits in those you date. You will gain a more realistic picture of your "dream girl" or "knight in shining armor."

Remember, though, that you should not view dating as merely a search for a husband or wife. Don't be in a hurry to get serious—with God's help, you will find the right mate at the right time—and keep in mind that your goal is to give to your date in friendship, genuine concern and good, clean recreation...

Seek Counsel Early

Marriage is a divine institution (Gen. 1:26-27, 2: 18, 21-24), and we should make every effort to insure its success. One way is through proper mate selection. When you find yourself getting interested in a certain someone, it is good to get counsel (Prov. 11:14).

Talk to those who know you both, especially your parents and families. Your parents know you and your strengths and weaknesses. You should seek and consider carefully their advice concerning a potential mate.

Be aware that most of your friends and peers will be romantics and will see a mate in anyone you pick. This is not to say that friends who know you well are not a good source of counsel, but be sure they are being honest and constructive in their evaluations.

When seeking advice be sure to be open-minded. How often we all want to hear the answer we want from someone else! But to avoid marital problems later, it is wise now to maintain an open mind and honestly seek help. Be open about your feelings. Disclose your positive views as well as any apprehensions. Take off the proverbial rose-colored glasses and look objectively at the person with whom you want to spend the rest of your life.

Men (and marriage is for men not boys), the major areas you should look for in women are compatibility and adaptability. Does a young lady easily follow your lead? Do you sense that she respects you? Are you able to lead her in every way (Eph. 5:22)?

Ask yourself: Do I really deeply care for her? Is she the most lovely person in the world to me? Her physical attraction and personality must make her tops in your book (verse 25). What about her intelligence and maturity? Would she make a good mother? Does she desire children?

Finally, what is her level of spirituality? Is she godly? If pleasing God is the driving force in her life, chances are that she will apply God's marital laws, which are so necessary for success.

Women, consider how sensible the man you are planning on marrying is. If he makes poor decisions or is reckless in his habits (driving, drinking, taking care of his health), will you be able to respect him and submit to him (verse 24, 1 Pet. 3:1) ? Does he ask for input from you before making decisions?

How caring is he about you? Does he show love and concern, not attempting to spoil your future with premarital sex and necking—1 Cor. 6:18? Does he find you attractive and is he expressive to you in proper affection and words? Do you find him physically attractive?

Does he have a good job? Will he be a good provider for you? Or will lack of finances be a source of arguments? Even though you may wish to work after you're first married, when children come along, it is essential that the husband be able to provide. Will he make a good father? Does he like children? What views does he have about child rearing? Are they the same as yours? How can two walk together in any matter unless they agree (Amos 3:3)?

The Engagement Period

So, after much consideration you decide that you are right for each other. What now? Some have become engaged, set the date and merely notified the minister and their families. This doesn't show much respect for families or minister.

One way is to counsel with a minister first. Tell him about your interest in each other and that you would like to become engaged. This gives him the opportunity to help you by advising a longer waiting period or by mentioning certain difficulties he might have seen. He may want to know that these difficulties are now resolved.

Remember, engagement not only means a flashy ring on the third finger of your left hand, but carries with it a promise to marry. So before you make such an acceptance and formal announcement, be sure you are ready to marry!

After securing a minister's or counselor's advice, next call or see the parents of the bride-to-be. (Some may want to put this first, followed by counsel with a minister.) Ask the father for the daughter's hand. Many a father has felt bypassed, overlooked or neglected when this wasn't done, and it negatively influences future relationships in the family.

When both sets of parents are consulted, it makes them feel more involved and makes them more willing to help the couple. If distance is a problem, a phone call would be next best to asking in person. It produces more confidence in and a better relationship among everyone when parents, their children and prospective mates have met before the actual engagement. If that's not possible, meetings ought to take place during the engagement period.

Suppose your parents disapprove of your prospective mate. Take their comments to heart. You will need to seriously and intelligently decide what to do in such a situation. Ask what it would take for their approval.

Barring parental bigotry, parental views should be heavily weighed. To force them into acceptance is to ask for future in-law trouble as well as probable marital trouble for you, the couple (Prov. 18:19).

Engagement periods vary according to the couple. Some have short engagements, some longer. It is not advisable to wait longer than a year; closeness (and you should be drawing closer) for too long a time may lead to premarital sexual involvement.

It is during engagement that you should spend most of your free time together. This is the time when you begin to lose the "I" and "me" and "you" and become

"we" and "us." Each must consider what's good for "us." This takes time and often compromise.

Housing, furniture, foods, entertainment, automobiles are other factors needing the input from both individuals involved. Most especially, discuss your hopes in life, family plans, finances, living quarters and general outlook for living together.

Of prime importance is the wedding day itself. When will it be? Where will it be? In setting the date, be sure to check with the minister you've asked to perform the marriage. Then check with parents and see if that date is all right with them, since, in many areas, the father of the bride traditionally bears much of the financial cost of the wedding. He is definitely to be considered for his input as to when it takes place.

The location of the wedding will depend largely on the bride. She will probably want to have it in her hometown. The proper hall will depend on the size of the wedding and whether there is to be a catered meal or only refreshments. Here again, parents and minister should be consulted regarding the plans.

Once all the physical details—when, where, by whom — are worked out, invitations may be ordered. If the other planning can be done early, beautiful invitations may be ordered at fairly reasonable costs from various companies.

Premarital Counsel

Next in your preparation for the big event is counsel with a minister. He will probably want to spend at least two sessions (probably more) discussing marriage with you.

With his appreciation and understanding of the marriage institution, a minister will want to do all he can to facilitate your happiness since you have asked him to perform your wedding (usually the minister you counsel with will be the one performing the wedding).

Throughout his meetings with you, your minister or counselor will be accumulating information to help you plan your future together. He will be looking for the signs that make for a good marriage as well as those that lead to problems.

According to authorities, there are certain qualities that make a person "most marriageable": adaptability and flexibility, empathy, ability to work through problems, ability to give and receive love, emotional stability, similar family backgrounds, similarities between the couple themselves, communication.

The Big Day

Finally, you are as prepared as possible for that special day. Double-check to make sure all is in readiness. Rehearse for the ceremony.

Before walking down that aisle be sure to consider the commitment you're about to make. Let us go over the words in the ceremony that God's Church uses.

The minister would ask the man:

"Do you, then [groom], faithfully promise and covenant with God, in the presence of these witnesses, to take [the bride] to be your lawful wedded wife, and to cleave to her unto death—to love her, cherish her, honor her and provide for her?"

The minister would ask the woman: "And do you [bride], faithfully promise and covenant with God, in the presence of these witnesses, to take [the groom] to be your lawful wedded husband, for the remainder of your natural life, and as God has ordained, to submit yourself unto him as unto the Eternal, to be subject to him in everything and to respect him?"

When you say "I do" to these promises, you are committing yourselves to a lifetime together (Matt. 19:4-9).

Marriage was established by God at creation and pictures God's relationship with Israel (Isa. 54:5, Ezek. 16:8). It also depicts the spiritual relationship between Jesus Christ and the Church (Eph. 5:21-33, Rev. 19:7-9).

So be sure you know what is involved when you say "I do" on your wedding day, and be sure you intend to live up to the responsibilities of this godly institution.

With the words, "By the authority of Jesus Christ, I now pronounce you husband and wife," may you two become one and truly live happily ever after.

10 KEYS TO BUILDING A HAPPY MARRIAGE

Now that we've looked at how to prepare for marriage and know you've chosen the right person to marry it's time to look at 10 key points that those who are well experienced in the art of marriage tell us will lead to a successful and happy marriage.

1) BE COMMITTED TO YOUR SPOUSE

In his booklet "How to Have a Joyous Marriage", Rod Meredith has the following to say about commitment in marriage:

The expression "till death do us part" may seem old fashioned or passé to many young people. But those same couples may be suffering loneliness, emptiness and misery if they leave that concept out of their marriages.

Yet today, most people take for granted the modern option of leaving their mate and forsaking their marriage vows. Many couples plan for the eventuality of divorce by having a lawyer write up a prenuptial agreement. Then they promise to stay together for life, but insist on acting "prudently" to protect their assets in case the marriage doesn't last. This idea may seem wise and prudent, but is it really? No!

The common acceptance of the "escape hatch" of an easy divorce creates a vicious cycle. The more some people divorce, the easier it seems for others to do likewise. And the breakdown of a society has begun!

Nearly all thoughtful men and women realize that a stable home and family is basic for a decent society. As our homes and marriages come apart, so the wildness, ruthlessness and violence in our society will increase.

It is vital that we all grasp that the basis for marriage itself is the supreme purpose of our Creator! That's right! If you leave the great God who made us male and female out of the picture, then human reason is the only basis for anything--and absolute chaos will ensue.

It is God who said: "Let us make man in our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. Then God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth" (Genesis 1:26-28).

God instituted marriage. We see here that it is God who made us male and female. And His first command to humans was to "multiply"--obviously implying marriage and home. God the Father is the Author of marriage. In Matthew 19, Jesus gave us some principles concerning marriage. The Pharisees tested His teaching on the subject by asking, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for just any reason?" (Matthew 19:3).

In other words, can a man put away his wife for just any reason? They distorted what Moses had said in the Old Testament about putting a wife away, and would even use a pimple, a wart or almost anything as an excuse to put their wives away.

And He answered and said to them, "Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning made them male and female," and said, "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh"? (verse 4-5).

God made the man and the woman for each other. He created the man and his wife to complement one another physically, psychologically, emotionally and mentally so they could live a balanced and happy life together. Jesus taught that a man should leave his father and his mother and cleave to his wife!

If you do have to bring senile or infirm in-laws to your home later, after the marriage is firmly established, then that's different. But at the beginning, and certainly for the first several years, normally, you're to leave relatives and cleave to your wife or your husband.

Throughout your married life, always remember that it is GOD who made you "one." In a true marriage, a man and woman covenant before God to take each other as mates for life. Under all normal circumstances, you should stay together. If need be, you should pray and work to save your marriage.

In Malachi 2:13-16, our Creator shows why He sometimes withholds His blessing: "You cover the altar of the LORD with tears, with weeping and crying; so He does not regard the offering anymore, nor receive it with good will from your hands. Yet you say, "For what reason?" Because the LORD has been witness between you and the wife of your youth, with whom you have dealt treacherously; yet she is your

companion and your wife by covenant. But did He not make them one, having a remnant of the Spirit? And why one? He seeks godly offspring. Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously with the wife of his youth. "For the LORD God of Israel says that He hates divorce, for it covers one's garment with violence," says the LORD of hosts. "Therefore take heed to your spirit, that you do not deal treacherously."

Notice that God says plainly that He hates divorce! So should you. That doesn't mean you hate divorced people. Neither does God. Rather, He pities them and wishes that we humans would quit fighting and arguing and learn to love one another.

If we would truly do this--and make a real commitment when we marry--then we could work out any problems that might arise. We could learn the lessons of giving, sharing and forgiving in a way that only marriage can teach. Our faithfulness to our mates shows our Maker that our commitment to Him will also be lasting" (p.2-5).

In an article entitled "What To Do When Your Mate Will Not!" that appeared in the WCG booklet "How to Have a Happy Marriage" (p.50-59) Earl Williams writes the following about commitment and what to do when your spouse isn't anywhere near as committed as you are:

What To Do When Your Mate Will Not!

Have you ever thought about leaving your mate because he or she refuses to fulfill his or her part of the marriage? What is a person supposed to do when a mate will not? The answer is simple and effective: You do when your mate will not.

Why Divorce?

Divorce destroys lives. It reaches in and tears apart the very heart and soul of a family. Some people, in the depths of the pain and suffering of an unhappy marriage, naturally feel it is better to break up rather than to continue living in misery. Although it may seem like the quick and easy way out of problems, it is the beginning of a whole new set of problems. Two generations ago divorce was a disgrace-now it is a statistical race. Of course, couples once stayed together and endured the pain and difficulties that accompany a bad marriage.

Through good times and bad times they tried to stay together, to raise their children together, and in spite of the many hurts and tears, to hope for a marriage that would take them through the golden years to the twilight of their lives. It often enough didn't work. And there were reasons.

Today, people have very little tolerance for pain and suffering in marriage. At the least little problem, the threat of divorce is wheeled out. Our society has made divorce an easy option - a parachute out of marital problems. But is divorce really that parachute?

What a pity that grown-ups often fail to consider the children. The children of a divorced couple go through pain - emotional, mental and even physical pain. Parents - when you are more than one - are the child's whole world. When you break up, you are breaking up the world of your child. You are shattering your child's emotional

security. The child feels abandoned, frightened and insecure about the future. A child's loyalty is torn between two parents who think they love that child very much. You need to think about the hurt you inflict upon your children in your quest to get out of the "hurt" you feel in your marriage. Is your happiness more important than that of your children? After all, they did not make you get married - they did not ask to be born. But now they are asking you to give them a whole family to grow up in. And it is still in your power to give them the whole family they desire and need.

Children are half of you and half of your mate, and they need both of you to reach their full potential. Fractured families produce fractured children. Alone after a divorce, you cannot give them what they need - you cannot be both father and mother. Now you may be thinking, "Isn't it better for my children to live with me in peace than with both of us in war?" That's not necessarily so!

Research now shows that, except in cases of extreme child abuse, children are better off in a home of discord where both parents live than in a divorced home with one parent.

According to Dr. Archibald Hart, a clinical psychologist and author of the book *Children of Divorce*, less than 10 percent of children surveyed felt that the divorce of their parents helped their lives. In fact, it generally made it worse.

Now you may not have children to think about. So, will divorce make your life happier? Probably not. Why not? Because you may be half of the problem and you cannot divorce yourself from yourself! Think about that one for a while. You still must live with yourself.

Divorce can exact a great and long-lasting emotional and physical toll. Those who divorce are experiencing higher rates of mental disorders, heart disease, cancer, high blood pressure and cirrhosis of the liver than those who tough it out. But why even tough it out when there is still a better solution?

They say that it takes two to make a marriage right! If you stay the chances are great that you can save your marriage in spite of what your mate does or does not do. Two wrongs do not make a fight, but one right can make a marriage. Let us get some marriage counseling from the apostle Paul. "If any brother has a wife who does not believe, and she is willing to live with him, let him not divorce her" (I Cor. 7:12, New King James). Why? "For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband..." (verse 14).

Even the children, Paul says in this same verse, are benefited when one mate is striving to live rightly. The mate who is striving to do what is right has a special influence over the mate. How? By his or her positive actions. If you do what is right in marriage, it influences your mate positively. It is possible for God to use your example to turn your mate around. But if you leave there is no hope!

So stay, and let the power of your example turn your marriage around. The apostle Peter said that "... even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives [or husbands], when they observe your chaste conduct accompanied by fear" (I Pet. 3:1-2).

You can turn that lemon into the sweetest lemonade you ever tasted. As frustrated and hopeless as you may feel right now, with the help of God, your marriage can be happier than you dreamed possible.

Make a Commitment!

Commitment is the foundation of a successful marriage. Even though your mate may not be as committed as you are, your commitment is needed to power you through the difficult times. Times when you will not feel like doing, because your mate will not do. Times when everything you do is interpreted by your mate as being wrong - when with all your heart you are trying to please.

Commitments are made on your knees before God. He will give the power to do when your mate will not. Go to God - talk to him - make a commitment to him that you will stay with your marriage - to work with your marriage until you achieve success.

This commitment will motivate you, and give you a positive frame of mind. You know where you are going, and you have the confidence of knowing that God is for you. And, "If God is for us, who can be against us?" (Rom. 8:31).

The next thing you need to do is face the reality of marriage. Come out of the fantasy world of Hollywood romance. Come into the real world of marriage where real people through hard work and perseverance build real marriages that last. Be realistic about marriage.

Marriage was not intended to be like a bowl of peaches and cream, but like a bed of roses. I am talking about a real bed of roses - you know the kind with beautiful, sweet smelling flowers and sharp, painful thorns. Marriage was meant to have anniversaries and adversities - for it is through overcoming adversities that we grow and learn.

Look at marriage as an institution of higher learning whose founder and chancellor is Almighty God. When he brought the first couple into his institution, he gave them the goal to achieve total oneness through learning from each other and a lot of hard work (Gen. 2:24-25). In the process (through the curriculum of marriage) they - and others since - learn many lessons and have many tests to develop individual and collective character. Each anniversary marks a graduation from one level of growth to another - from one level of challenge to the next. The goal of God's institution of marriage is to teach husbands and wives the supreme lesson of the universe: oneness through selflessness.

Love is the secret of true happiness, and marriage is the foremost place to learn it. The deeper you learn that supreme lesson of giving - yes, even the hard part of giving when your mate will not - the more you will grow and the happier you will be.

Happiness Is...

Your happiness is not dependent on what your mate or anyone else does or does not do. It is dependent on what you do. Love is giving, and giving (what you do) produces happiness. Jesus Christ said: "It is more blessed [happy] to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35). So take charge of your happiness by giving love instead of looking to get and becoming unhappy when your mate does not give it to you.

When you give, you control your own happiness - you can become as happy as you are willing to give. Don't try it; do it - it works! Happiness is you fulfilling your role. Husbands, you were created to lead the family, being provider, protector, chief server and lover. You were designed to dedicate your life to your wife. This is why the apostle Paul said: "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for it" (Eph. 5:25).

When you love, you become very, very happy. Your wife may not even appreciate your loving leadership, but you still will be happy because you are doing what God created you to do. You were made to lovingly lead a woman, and when you do it with God's way of giving and seeking her best interest, you will be fulfilled and happy.

So what do you do when your wife will not? You do - you do yourself a favor - you fulfill your role. Love your wife! Women, God designed you to function in a role that produces happiness. When God made the woman he said: "It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him" (Gen. 2:18). God created your mind to be responsive to your husband, to willingly surrender your self to him (Eph. 5:22).

Now that is not easy for you to do, especially if your husband is not a loving leader. But the beauty of God's way is that your happiness depends on what you do. If you fulfill your role in love to your husband-helping him, responding positively to him, submitting and surrendering to him, you will make yourself very happy.

Accept Each Other

You could be making your own self frustrated and unhappy. How? By trying to make your mate over into your image, and that is impossible! A long time ago (even before you married), you formed a fanciful idea about what you wanted your mate to be like. Maybe you still have expectations that your mate will someday fulfill your dreams. Forget it - it will not happen! Your unrealistic expectations will only produce frustrations in your marriage.

Expecting your mate to be what you want is selfishness, and selfishness always leads to unhappiness. Think about this: You are probably not what your mate always dreamed of either. So stop putting this unnecessary pressure on yourself or on your mate.

Accept your mate the way he or she is, the good and the bad. How do you do that? Accept your mate by concentrating on the good points. There is something of quality about everybody. You were able to see those good points before you married. Well, they are still there. All you have to do is look beyond yourself and you will see them. Actively praise your mate for the good points. Build your mate up in the eyes of others, and he or she will grow in esteem in your own eyes. This kind of affirmative action will make your mate feel good and make you feel good.

Do Good for Evil

But what do you do when your mate does you wrong? What do you do when that "fight back" response wells up inside you? You must do something, because you are about to explode. But what do you do?

Do what Jesus Christ said, "Love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and persecute you" (Matt.5:44). When you do it out of an attitude of genuine love, it works miracles. What are those miracles?

First of all, you help yourself get rid of the stress and frustration. Love is the greatest stress releaser there is in human conflict. Giving good for evil transforms your negative energy into positive energy. It makes you feel good in spite of the abuse you may be receiving. Doing good for evil gives you a shot of happy medicine that is able to cure your marital blues. You will not need sedatives and tranquilizers.

When your mate rails against you with harsh words, still the troubled waters by saying soft and pleasant things. And let us add, saying it at the right time is also important.

Sometimes doing good is saying nothing while your mate is angry. In these situations it is best to let any anger be vented before you say a word. Later, when the atmosphere has cooled down, you can say the pleasant and sweet words that produce peace. If you do this you will be amazed at how "a soft answer turns away wrath" (Prov. 15:1).

This miracle even has the power to transform your mate's whole approach toward you. He or she may be accustomed to having you argue and fight back. By changing the way you react, you begin to change the way your mate acts toward you. Doing good for evil will help your mate realize that it is a new ball game.

A husband will have to change the way he pitches, because the wife is not hitting back anymore. So why should he continue to pitch when nobody is hitting? Why should he continue to fight when there is nobody to fight with? It gets boring fighting with yourself. By doing good for evil you control how the game is played, and how your marriage is lived.

In the past when you did evil for evil, it was harder for your mate to see his or her wrong because you blinded your mate by your wrong. Feeling the sting of your response, your mate felt justified in reacting.

The apostle Peter observed this phenomenon when he wrote: "Likewise you wives, be submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives, when they observe your chaste conduct accompanied by fear" (1 Pet.3:1-2). There is power in a good example! And do not forget the positive effect your doing good for evil will have on your children. By your good example you are building a proper way of give in them. You are doing what they will need to be doing later. You are teaching them how to get along with people - the only way that leads to real peace. Now you may be thinking, "How do I know all of this will work in my marriage? What if I do all of this and my mate just uses it to take advantage of me?"

You are forgetting about one very important Person who has unique ways of helping you like nobody else can. God can equalize the situation - if you have him working for you. Remember this, that no matter what your mate does or does not do, your happiness depends on what you do - how much you give. It is based on God's supernatural law of love, and Almighty God stands in back of it and guarantees it. It works!

You may feel that it is unfair for you to do good while your mate gets away with evil. Listen to what the apostle Paul says: "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap" (Gal. 6:7). Nobody gets away with anything. God is the great equalizer. He settles all accounts, and for the good of all concerned. This is why Paul advised: "Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, 'Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,' says the Lord" (Rom. 12:19).

So, ask God for the patience and perseverance to continue doing when your mate will not. Yes, do your whole family a favor - Do!

Cecil Osborne offers us the following comments about how this quality of giving when your mate doesn't give:

There is a universal law of mind and spirit, in three parts....

1. I can change no other person by direct action.
2. I can change only myself.
3. When I change, others tend to change in reaction to me.

Many who hear this for the first time agree to apply it, but often use it simply as a form of manipulation.

One wife said, "I made some radical changes in the way I acted for two whole weeks, and not once did I see any change in my husband!" The group helped her to see that she had to effect the changes within her own personality, not as a bribe to her husband, but because the changes needed to be made, whether he ever changed or not. Her husband had responded to her charge with the dry comment. "She's made a lot of ten-day or two-week changes before, but I'm not going to believe she means business until I see that the changes are permanent" (The Art of Understanding Your Mate, p.24).

Earl Williams in another article that he wrote called "Five Ways to Love Your Mate" that appeared in the WCG brochure "Love, Marriage and Sex" says these things about commitment and the agape love that strengthens that commitment and makes it work:

God created marriage to be the most joyous, love-filled relationship. Unfortunately, many husbands and wives are not actively loving one another. Their LQ is dangerously low. They endure loveless marriages of misery.

God wants husbands and wives to be lovers...The first way to love your mate is with the love expressed by the Greek word agape. This is the word translated in I Corinthians 13 as "love" or, in the Authorized Version, "charity."

Agape means unconditional, unselfish giving. In marriage agape could be defined as a willful commitment to give to your imperfect mate without expecting to get in it return. You consciously, under all circumstances, make a lifelong commitment to never stop giving to your mate.

God is the Rock from which agape flows. He is the source of the force that will give you the power to overcome all obstacles in your marriage. Your union must begin with God. The apostle John wrote, "And truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ" (I John 1:3).

The joy of agape will be added to your marriage if you first fellowship with God through Bible study, prayer and obedience to God's commandments. You will gain access to agape through God's Holy Spirit (Rom. 5:5). God will be at the center of your marriage, giving it strength.

God plus husband plus wife equal one agape-filled marriage. This is the missing formula for success in so many marriages. As you submit to God's laws concerning marriage and other human relationships, He will unleash the power of agape to you, which helps you to willfully choose to love your mate.

Society presents the false and damaging picture of love controlling you. In this false picture, love captures and enslaves you. You are a helpless "prisoner of love," unable to control your feelings. Have you heard married people say: "I cannot love him anymore—the feeling is gone"?

In truth, you choose to love or not to love. Agape is not a feeling, but a conscious and willful act you control. God commands us to love one another because He knows we can control love (2 John 5). Follow through on your decision to love your mate by committing yourself to give the love that "never fails" (1 Cor. 13:8, New American Bible).

Commitment Produces Endurance

You should have promised in a covenant with God, on your wedding day, to love your mate unto death. Pray daily to God for the power to love your mate and to keep that commitment in your mind constantly. Determine to allow nothing or no one, including yourself, to stop you from loving your mate. Go to God and recommit yourself to loving your mate.

Since agape is a willful commitment to give, your will and commitment must be followed by action. You cannot get love—you can only give it. Regardless of how little you receive, you will always have love in your marriage because the quantity and quality of love is dependent on how much you give.

In an emergency you would not hesitate to sacrifice your life to save your mate. Are you willing to sacrifice your life daily by pushing aside your needs and wants to satisfy your mate, by putting your mate's needs ahead of your own? When you are tired, do you get up and serve instead of waiting to be served?

Don't Give to Get

The apostle Paul admonished Christians: "Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others" (Phil. 2:3-4).

Strive to reach the state where fulfilling your mate's needs becomes, next to your commitment to God, the predominant need of your life. Give and you will have agape. You may be saying, "But my mate doesn't deserve special love." But agape motivates one to give to an imperfect person—yes, even to an undeserving person.

Agape—unconditional, unselfish love—does not require the other person to change or be perfect. There are no conditions, no qualifications for the giving of agape. Jesus Christ, the perfect husband and the only human who ever perfectly expressed agape, gave His life for us while we were yet sinners (Eph. 5:25, Rom. 5:8). Christ did not require us to change first—His love was unconditional.

We ought to follow Christ's perfect example of love. Demand of yourself to give to your mate even when you have been wronged. By giving in spite of your mate's shortcomings, you will feel more positive toward your spouse.

Peter expressed the principle in 1 Peter 4:8: "Above all things have fervent love for one another, for 'love will cover a multitude of sins.'" Your unconditional love may cause a positive response in your mate, although this should never be the motive for giving (1 Pet. 3:1-2).

Do not become disappointed. It is easy to become disillusioned after giving and giving without any response, not even a thank-you. Agape does not require love in return. Love does not give in order to get.

The apostle Paul taught that if we give with expectations of getting in return, our love is vain: "And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing" (1 Cor. 13:3).

Remove expectation and then love will fill your heart, leaving no room for disappointment. Jesus Christ taught that the joy is in the giving: "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35).

And yet, at the same time, you can take heart from God's promise that if you faithfully and unselfishly give, you will eventually be rewarded: "Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over...For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you" (Luke 6:38).

Agape is the most powerful facet of the whole of love. Agape will carry your marriage through the most difficult trials...God created marriage to be the closest human relationship. Yet, many married couples live together as strangers. A cold curtain of loneliness divides them as they go their separate ways.

What about your marriage? Do you live under the same roof, but as strangers to one another? God did not intend husbands and wives to live together like total strangers. He has a solution to your problem.

What is the love of belonging? This love is characterised by a bond of unity, companionship and loyal devotion. The love of belonging shines brightest in older couples. They act alike and think alike. They have become one. The love of belonging is not just for older couples, but for all couples.

God created man with the need to belong. God looked at all He had made and saw that "it was very good" (Gen. 1:31). But when God looked at Adam He saw something that was not good: "And 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, Authorized Version).

Adam was lonely. God prescribed the love of belonging to cure Adam's problem. God gave Adam a woman, Eve, to love. Through giving, the first married couple could have grown to belong to one another. This need to belong cannot be satisfied through any other person, whether mother, father, sister or brother only through your mate: "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh" (verse 24)...

Accept your mate the way your mate is, not the way you would like him or her to be. Your mate will not feel he or she belongs as long as he or she senses you are not satisfied with him or her.

Emphasize the positive things about your mate. Make a list of all the good things. Think back to the time when you were engaged and of all the qualities you admired. You might be surprised to find those same qualities in your spouse today. Constantly think on these good qualities. Look to find more admirable qualities. The love of belonging is making your mate feel accepted.

Learn to empathize with your mate. Push out your concerns and concentrate on the concerns of your mate. Seek total identification with your husband or wife—immerse yourself in your mate's concerns, feel your mate's hurts, experience his or her frustrations, sing your mate's joys.

Cleave to Each Other

The apostle Paul encourages us to bear—take upon ourselves—one another's burdens (Gal. 6:2). You will become an emotional refuge for your mate—a hiding place where your mate can find warmth and shelter from the storms of life. Both of you will have a home in each other's hearts. Your mate will have a place to belong, and the love of belonging will bring you closer together.

In Genesis 2:24, Authorized Version, God tells married couples to "cleave" to each other. The word cleave was translated from the Hebrew verb *dabaq*, which has the root meaning "to solder" or "to weld together." The strongest welding technique is called brazing, two pieces of metal welded together under intense heat. The molecules of the two metals become inseparable.

God compares the trials of life to a fire (I Pet. 1:7). By cleaving to one another as you go through life's challenges you will become one flesh" (Gen. 2:24). Becoming one physically, mentally and spiritually should be the goal of every married couple" (p.10-12).

2) HAVE GOOD, OPEN COMMUNICATION IN YOUR MARRIAGE

Josh McDowell offers these points to becoming a better communicator in his book "The Secret of Loving":

1. Work at It

Doing what comes naturally may be the motto for many in our culture, but becoming a good communicator does not just happen. All of us have been twisted by the self-centeredness of our lives, so we need to make a lot of effort based on solid commitment to better communication...

One of my habits was to read the newspaper at breakfast. I continued it early into our marriage. When Dottie, however, reminded me that the breakfast table is a great place to talk, I gave it up.

For the past ten years of our marriage I cannot remember ever reading a newspaper at the breakfast table. I've learned to cue myself as I walk to the table, "Now, Josh, remember. You're going to listen to your wife."

When Dottie came into my study I used to say, "Honey, I can't right now. I'm busy." But working at making communication with her a priority requires a different response. Now when she comes in, no matter what I'm doing, I stop, turn toward her, and try my best to concentrate on what she says. For me, developing the habit even required saying to myself, "I am going to hear everything my wife says and I am going to respond to everything my wife says"...

2. Learn to Compromise

A healthy marriage relationship is a give-and-take situation, especially where differing styles of communicating are involved. Each person needs the freedom to be himself or herself while still adapting to the other's needs. One style isn't necessarily a better than another[eg. Being concise compared to plenty of details]. It's just that people are different when it comes to needs in communication and a skillful communicator knows when to adjust...

3. Seek to Understand...

One of the keys to communication and to developing intimacy is to realize that the other person is not only trying to understand but he or she really cares. This empathy will cause both individuals to be more open in the relationship. When, on the other hand, you sense that the other person doesn't want to listen, or is not trying to understand you, it affects your self-esteem.

You soon begin to withdraw because you feel that what you have to say is not being viewed as important. You start to feel that you are not important and the relationship moves into a danger zone. Previous biases or negative expectations must be set on the shelf to keep them from distorting the conversation you are having. Our commitment must be to really hear the other person, regardless of differing convictions or disagreements...

4. Affirm Your Spouse's Worth, Dignity, and Value

Every person has a deep need to be heard, to be listened to. This very act of listening communicates a sense of value, esteem, love, and dignity. It makes the person feel important. And a relationship usually will not progress beyond the level of mutual communication and respect shown by each person, one for the other. Try always to reinforce the image of Christ.

George and Nikki Koehler explain the need for affirming value and esteem through careful listening:

When you and I listen to another person we are conveying the thought that "I'm interested in you as a person, and I think that what you feel is important I respect your thoughts, even if I don't agree with them. I know that they are valid for you. I feel sure that you have a contribution to make. I'm not trying to change you or evaluate you. I just want to understand you. I think you're worth listening to, and I want you to know that I'm the kind of person that you can talk to...(p.71-80)

"Attention to what our mate says," writes Richard Austin, "is one measure of our respect. Too often we hear the words of a conversation but do not really hear the message. Listening to words and hearing the message are quite different" ...

Really listening says to another person, "You are important! You are of great value!" Respect begins with listening.

Listening is one of the most profound ways to show someone that you take them seriously; that you care; that you value their opinion. Dr. David Augsburger puts it this way, "An open ear is the only believable sign of an open heart." Here's how Augsburger relates effective listening to a person's self-esteem:

If you listen to me, then I must be worth hearing.

If you ignore me, I must be a bore.

If you approve of my views or values, then I have something of worth to offer.

If you disapprove of my comment or contribution, then I apparently had nothing to say.

If I cannot be with you without using your comments for self-evaluation, then leveling will be impossible. If I am preoccupied with what you think of me, then I have already shut you out'...(p.62-63)

5. Be Positive and Encouraging

Being positive is a real plus factor in communications. It promotes openness with your mate, whereas criticism tends to hinder healthy communication. Two very critical people may communicate, but it will not be healthy communication. By nature we each tend to accentuate and remember the negative...

The ratio of praise to criticism in a conversation ought to be a healthy 90 percent praise and 10 percent criticism.

Are you a positive communicator with people? It will be far easier for them to reach out to you and share if your orientation is positive...

Breaking into Josh's points to better communication I'd just like to interject a passage from an article entitled "When Marriages Go Sour – Attitudes That Sweeten" by Donald Schroeder from the WCG booklet "How To Have a Happy Marriage" that focuses on this point of being a positive communicator. He writes:

Express Appreciation

Damaged marital relationships need a positive first step in the right direction. Somebody has to step forth first and break harmful patterns of communication. Before you married, you saw qualities that you appreciated in your mate.

Undoubtedly you expressed your admiration and appreciation of these qualities many times and in many ways to the one you loved. But in marriage so many make the big mistake of failing to continue to express appreciation for the small things - or even the big things - provided by their mates. Even good marriages can slowly sour and die because husbands and wives take each other's labors and efforts for granted.

What good qualities do you appreciate in your mate now? To this you should not immediately reply, "But he (or she) has all these bad qualities and habits that bother me!" Right now focus your mind on your mate's good qualities. List them in your mind. Write them down to impress your mind if you have to. It's important to recognize good qualities in a mate or in your marriage even if those qualities seem to be only a few now.

Are you thankful for those qualities? Have you recently told your mate you appreciate them in him or her? If you're a wife, maybe your husband is not as considerate or affectionate as you would like, but he's a good provider of physical necessities. Have you told him you appreciate his efforts and energy to provide for the family?

If you're a husband, maybe you feel your wife is not handling her part of the budget as thriftily as she could. These are difficult and inflationary times for all. Have you told her you appreciate her efforts to do the best she knows how under the circumstances? Have you encouraged her, not harangued her, about handling her expenditures?

Have you commended her for her care of the children perhaps, or her housekeeping, or possibly the added income she provides? There isn't a human being alive who doesn't want to receive appreciation. God created that a living law! Break that law by constant focus on negative things or problems about a person, and everything in life begins to appear totally negative.

Lack of expressing appreciation for good things causes one to lose touch with the reality of any good in another. Many mates destroy their marriage out of ingratitude. Marriage counselors see this problem all the time. The scriptures teach us the need to be constantly expressing appreciation, "giving thanks always for all things..." (Eph. 5:20). You want to be appreciated? Then express genuine appreciation to your mate - or to any other person for that matter.

If you are consistent at expressing appreciation where it is due (and it is due even for small things others do for us), there will be a remarkable response. Maybe expressing appreciation won't solve all your marital problems, but it is a positive first step to improve and heal wounded marital relations and communications.

Jesus taught us the critical overall principle in all right living: "Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is [the purpose off the law and the prophets]" (Matt. 7:12).

Now back to Josh's points on being a better communicator:

6. Practice Confidentiality

What a plus factor it is in communication when your mate knows that you are able to keep things to yourself. There's automatically a greater willingness to be open with you. If you are a gossip—one who habitually talks about other people—you raise an immediate barrier to others sharing intimately with you for fear that you will make their innermost feelings public.

7. Wait for the Right Time

"Timely advice is as lovely as gold apples in a silver basket," we read in Proverbs 25:11 (TLB). Proverbs 15:23 echoes, "How wonderful it is to be able to say the right thing at the right time!" In a relationship, dialogue will be enhanced if the right words are spoken at the right time. And love must be your guide as to when and where you share bad news or discuss a difficult subject...

8. Share Your Feelings

A vulnerability that allows you to share feelings, inner thoughts, deep hurts, and great joys is essential to a healthy climate of intimacy and closeness. Learn to say how you feel in conversation as well as what you think. Partners can argue over thoughts and ideas, but feelings cannot be debated. They can only be acknowledged. So coming to understand each other's emotions is the gateway to psychological intimacy. When there is no regular expression of feeling between a couple, they will remain locked out of the love and intimacy that is their treasure...

9. Avoid Mind Reading

Warning: Don't take it for granted that the other person understands your gestures, the tone of your voice, or your body language. It becomes very frustrating in a relationship when each person assumes the other knows what he or she is thinking and feeling and wants to do. Mind reading rarely works and never consistently. You can't hold your spouse responsible for responding to your hurts, needs, or feelings of joy or thanksgiving if you haven't verbalised them. Everyone has to speak up!...

10. Give a Response

If there is one thing that always encourages sharing, it is giving either verbal or body language feedback. As one woman, hurt and frustrated from a total lack of response, was heard to exclaim, "If you're listening to me, respond! Say something. Say anything. Just let me know that you're listening to me!" When our heart reaches out to others, it yearns for acknowledgment.

Here are some helpful suggestions to show that you are absorbing what another is saying:

React physically. Turn toward the person. Lean forward. Nod your head in response. Keep looking the person in the eyes. Nothing shows greater interest than eye contact.

Request more information. Ask a question that seeks clarification or additional details: "What did you mean by that?" Or, "Why is that important to you?" In asking questions you are saying, "Tell me more—I'm interested."

Reflect on what has been said with a leading statement: "You seem quite excited by meeting him." Or, "That must have been rough on you." Reflective listening pays off in more intimate sharing.

Repeat or rephrase statements with feeling. Echoing the meaning or feeling of a statement both clarifies and encourages further communication.

Remain silent when someone is telling a story. Don't interrupt, and don't finish sentences for people. This is a hard one for me. I have to keep telling myself, "Don't interrupt, don't interrupt." Also, don't rush to fill a pause in the conversation simply

to avoid the silence—you may cut off something important the person was preparing to share... 93-94

11. Be Honest

The Apostle Paul saw the issue clearly when he admonished us to "speak the truth in love" (Ephesians 4:15). To speak the truth in love means to take into consideration the other person's feelings.

A truly skillful and loving communicator is sensitive to the consequences of his words and actions(p.81-95).

One of the very finest books that I have read on the subject of marriage is "Letters to Philip" by Charlie Shedd. It is a goldmine of helpful pointers for men to better understand and respond to the opposite sex. I'd like to quote now a series of passages from his book that deal with this matter of being a good communicator. Charlie Shedd writes:

Our seven goals for communication [between himself and his wife]

1. **We will aim to be best friends.** Since friendship is built on time spent together we will have no less than one good visit daily with each other. We will arrange our schedule for this and keep it high on the docket of each day's business.
2. **At least once a week we will go out together.** A dinner, lunch or any occasion to read each other's souls is time well spent. We will not let the children or company or the budget or a committee meeting or the tyranny of "the musts" and "the shoulds" crowd out the time for each other.
3. **We will make it a goal to be honest all the way.** Since this requires self-honesty first we will spend some time in healthy self-analysis. By reading, studying and discussion we will seek to understand how our personal histories are affecting our marriage.
4. **As an ideal, 48 hours will be our hiding limit.** But since absolute honesty cannot always meet a deadline we agree to this – if we are not yet able to shape our feelings in words, we will keep trying. We will admit that we are struggling inside and ask for continued patience.
5. **We will aim for total mercy and forgiveness.** We may question, but we will not condemn. We will seek a spirit between us where confession is heard with tenderness. We will be thankful for a place where we can face what we are.
6. **We will respect each other's privacy.** We will not crowd or jam the works by over-inquisitiveness. Aware that what we hide may be damaging, we nevertheless extend each other the amazing courtesy of inner destruction. Because self-revelation must come from the inside we will not push.
7. **We will remember that mystery is a blessing.** Because it takes a lifetime to close all the gaps in the most perfect relationship we will be gentle. We will love to the fullest what is given today and expectantly wait for tomorrow...(p.27-28)

[Wives will] do anything in the world for you if you put them at ease about their faults; build up their strong points; and reach that high level of kindness which seems to say "The blend is what the psychologists call "acceptance" and you'll find it a solid fixture in every solid marriage...(p.18)

Over the years I have known many of our gender whose attitude was "If only SHE would change things would be just dandy!" Of course, it isn't true that all the troubles will be your fault. Yet this is a fact you can count on: A wife is much more willing to face what is her fault if her husband has shown that he is willing to assume what is his responsibility...(p.20)

So if you lead out by asking her to help you improve, if you receive graciously what she has to offer and thank her for it, one day she'll turn the whole thing around and ask you to help her! Why? Because she will sense that she is married to a growing man and she will want to grow with him...(p.24)

There are three things I aim to do every day as a husband:

- 1. Tell her I love her**
- 2. Do something nice for her**
- 3. Pay her a compliment**

The truth is that this only sounds simple. But you try these as a regular discipline and you will see that they "say" easier than they "do". And the toughest of these to remember may be number three...(p.29)

One kind of praise from a husband is a real bell ringer in the heart of any wife. This is the kind that goes "I couldn't have done it without you!" or "I owe it all to you!" One reason why this can't miss is that the female has an innate longing to be of worth to the male. With the good ones you don't find much variance here...(p.21)

The Bible says, "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." This also goes for a woman. If you give her a lovely idea of herself, that's what she will try to become. This is why it makes so much difference what you're telling her. The time finally arrives when she accepts your estimate as her estimate of herself.

I've seen many an ordinary-looking woman grow into a lovely thing because her husband told her she was lovely. I regret to report that I have also seen some truly gorgeous women gradually fade away because they were no longer inspired from the one source that mattered most to them. All of which leads up to six very important words: If you like it, say so! (p.30-31)

Let's say that there is something you would like to change around here. You don't want to fight about it because you have a hunch that there must be some better way to handle this one. But you have decided that you've got to get it on the table. For your own personal peace and the future of your marriage in general the time has come to declare yourself? What do you do now?

I have a simple rule, which I shall pass along today as the right approach to get these little items moving. That is the crucial thing isn't it, just getting started. If you keep your head and say a prayer you can handle further developments as they come along. So here's the rule: Begin by telling her something you do like!

Suppose it's the lipstick she's been wearing lately. It really does make her look ghastly, but be assured you won't get to first base if you exclaim, "Oh no! You look like a streetwalker!" You could actually get the job done quicker, and leave her feeling good about it, if you simply told her nicely that in your opinion that particular color somewhat diminishes her natural beauty.

You will readily see that you have done a couple of good things here. You have assured her that you like the basic Marilyn and you have played to one of human nature's strongest desires. This is the hope that we will be able to make the best possible appearance. That how the Lord made us. We all want to impress to our maximum...(p.36-37)

Another thing to remember is that women go for ingenuity. The little secret things between you; the games you play in your courting; the happy surprises she wasn't expecting – these tell her many things. One thing they say is that you are putting her high on your agenda, and this has to be good. You are thinking of ways to please her, and a woman will glow inside when she knows you've secretly been planning her happiness.

Let me give you an example of one man's ingenuity and how it works to advantage in their marriage. I heard this one day at the golf course. We were discussing "golf widows" and the men were bemoaning their wives' complaints. This fellow listened them through. Then when the time was right, he said, "You never hear my wife cry, do you? The reason is we made a deal. When I play on Saturday, I take her to dinner that night. This way she's got something to look forward to. I even notice now that she feels sort of bad when I don't play!"

So maybe this is kindness with a hook in it. Agreed that he's getting something for himself by giving her something. But the fact is, she doesn't mind. She likes it. All of which means that, with a little inventiveness, life together can offer many challenges for making things nicer both ways. Here's a little secret you will do well to keep in the forefront: Women go for some practical devotion.

Questions, questions: Am I assuming my share of the work load at home? Am I hurrying off to the paper, to the television, to anywhere when I could take a few minutes to give her a hand? How long has it been since I surprised her by doing one of her jobs without telling her?...(p.44-45)

Some of the gripes I hear in marital consultation go like this: "He always keeps me waiting!... We never get anywhere on time..."He thinks he can show for dinner any old hour he pleases!"..."Why can't he let me know when he's held up at the office?" These are only a few selected at random from dozens more like them...

Most women appreciate a man who gets there on time most of the time and when he can't she knows that a phone call seldom costs more than a dime. Ten cents isn't much for a woman's peace of mind. Don't ever forget that a contented wife who knows her husband has been thinking of her feelings is worth every cent of whatever it costs to be considerate...(p.51-52)

"I love you because you're you!" ...are among the sweetest words ever to fall on a woman's ear. And the reason is that she wants to know that you know she is a person, not a thing! Things are to use. People are to love. Be sure it's not vice versa with you...(p.62)

A Half-dozen Nevers...

- 1. Never point in derision to something that she can't change.**
- 2. Never criticise her in public.**
- 3. Never compare her unfavourably with other women.**
- 4. Never drop a delayed bomb... What I have in mind is something like this: Suddenly telling her you don't like something she's been doing a long time...If she thinks at all, she's going to be asking, "What else doesn't he like?" It makes her nervous.**
- 5. Never go away when she's crying.**
- 6. Never lay a hand on her except in love...(p.63-66)**

She'll love you more if she knows that some of your nice gestures have been well thought out with her convenience in mind. The same applies to the little things like asking her to get your best suit ready a day ahead instead of blowing your stack because it's at the cleaners when you have a crucial appointment this very morning only you forgot to say so. Living with this absent-minded professor type must be terribly exasperating even to those saintly souls who hardly ever droop their wings. A woman is a woman and that means that she likes all the time you can give her for big deals, little deals and all the deals in between...(p.69)

There is one...[try not to] I probably should mention because I have heard so many women complain about this one. Those wives who endure it tell me that it gets awfully old for their husbands never to notice the new things. New hairdo, new dress, new perfume, new negligee, new anything...(p.70)

There is, incidentally, one short line, I'd never forget...It's for those moments when she steps out of the dressing room and you can tell she's wondering. If you don't like it and you loath to see your earnings go for things like this, now is the time to say, "I don't think it does you justice!" (Here we are once more at the same old rule: It isn't always what you do, it's how you do it that counts!)...(p.97)

In one town where I lived two rivers met. There was a bluff high above them where you could sit and watch their coming together. It was a wonderful place for lovers to park and study miscellaneous matters of communication. I am not thinking right now what you think I am thinking. What I am wishing is that I could take you and Marilyn there and then leave you to watch those two rivers in their meeting.

You would observe that well upstream, before they united, each river flowed gently along. But right at the point of their union, look out! Those two nice streams came at each other like fury. I have actually seen them on days when it was almost frightening to watch. They clashed in a wild commotion of frenzy and confusion. They hurled themselves head on as if each was determined that the other should end its existence right there.

Then, as you watched, you could almost see the angry white caps pair off, bow in respect to each other, and join forces as if to say "Let us get along now. Ahead of us there is something better." Sure enough, on downstream, at some distance, the river swept steadily on once more. It was broader there, more majestic, and it gave you the feeling that something had been fashioned out of the conflict.

A good marriage is often like that. When two independent streams of existence come together there will probably be some dashing of life against life at the juncture. Personalities clash. Ideas contend for power and habits vie for

position. Sometimes, like the waves, they throw up a spray that leaves you breathless and makes you wonder where has the loveliness gone. But that's all right. Like the two rivers, what comes out of their struggle may be something deeper, more powerful than what they were on their own...(p.82-83)

You will remember that in Letters to Karen I set down what your mother and I call our seven official rules for a good, clean fight. We decided to make these public not because they are the last word but because they have done so much for us...

- 1. Before we begin we must agree that the time is right.**
- 2. We will remember that our only aim is deeper understanding**
- 3. We will check our weapons often to be sure they're not deadly...One thing you don't want to destroy is a woman's pride. When a woman's pride is damaged, her sense of values gets warped and that lets loose a cage full of monsters. You will avoid this serious error if you aim to attack the problem, not the person!**
- 4. We will lower our voices one notch instead of raising them two.**
- 5. We will never quarrel or reveal private matters in public.**
- 6. We will discuss an armistice whenever either of us calls halt.**
- 7. When we have come to terms, we will put it away till we both agree it needs more discussing...(p.84-87)**

In our study of the subject of developing good communication we have come to the topic of handling conflict. I have a separate section after these 10 keys to a happy marriage about how to solve and not to solve conflicts in marriage so I am going to move on and leave the subject of handling conflict in marriage to later.

To conclude our look at being a better communicator I'd like to quote from Dr Meredith's booklet on marriage again where he discusses the subject of planning goals in one's family and marriage. He writes:

A truly meaningful home and marriage ought to have a number of goals in mind besides sexual fulfillment. Too often, young people are so consumed with sexual interest that they neglect to build a home, an enduring family and a meaningful life together. So when the sexual fireworks start to slow down after a few months or years of marriage, these people feel a sense of letdown or betrayal.

God mentions one of the reasons He made man and woman one in marriage. Notice again the inspired words of Malachi, "But did He not make them one, having a remnant of the Spirit? And why one? He seeks godly offspring. Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously with the wife of his youth" (Malachi 2:15).

A young husband and wife normally ought to be planning for children, a real home, a sense of family, stability and all that this implies. If both husband and wife are working, they need to plan together to set aside money so she can stop working for several years, at least, in order to have and rear children.

Couples should discuss what kind of home, education and family activities they feel will work out best for them. They should regularly set little goals to work on together. Then, as partners in their family enterprise, they should see that these smaller goals all fit in with and support the fulfillment of their major family goals.

An illustration of working toward a smaller goal might include planning together a summer vacation trip. Each partner might wish to do some reading and research separately, talk to different friends, get ideas. Then, together, they can spend time discussing alternatives, planning a tentative trip budget, and finalizing plans.

This type of goal-sharing and planning is obviously increased when a couple has children. Then they need to discuss regularly the children's health, development, education, friends, neighborhood problems and their respective goals in life.

That is one reason, among many others, why having children often serves to give greater strength and stability to a marriage.

Jesus Christ said to His disciples, "No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you" (John 15:15).

Even the Son of God did not withhold from His friends the plans and programs He and the Father had in mind. So you men, especially, open up and bring your wives into the planning process of how and where you want to live in the future, where you hope your career may take you and the goals you have in mind for yourself and for the family as a whole. Make them feel like an integral part of the big programs in your life (How to Have a Joyous Marriage, p.9-11).

3) GIVE PLENTY OF QUALITY TIME TO YOUR SPOUSE

Dr Meredith tells us the following in his booklet about marriage:

A young man will put his best foot forward during the courtship. He will walk and talk for hours with a pretty young woman he hopes to marry. His hormones are raging. So he will confide in her, encourage and flatter her, do almost anything to get this beautiful young woman to say "yes" and marry him.

But, not too many days or weeks after the marriage, a man may begin to withdraw. He seems to forget that his sweetheart agreed to marry because she honestly thought she was liked and respected as a person. She expected and hoped to be a full partner in life with her future husband--sharing with him their mutual plans, hopes and dreams.

However, when "hubby" starts coming home late with liquor on his breath and has nothing to say, or when he eats dinner quickly and silently and then plops himself in front of the TV, or when he spends most nights away from home playing pool with "the boys"--that hurts!

So before you even become officially engaged, you had better become "best friends" with your future mate--and mean it. You had better find out if you truly have a whole range of interests in common--besides sex and romance!

In a truly happy marriage, the two individuals are to become like one person. There is to be a oneness of mind, body, emotions, attitudes and a sharing in nearly every aspect of life.

This doesn't mean that a man can never play basketball, handball, pool, or cards with other men occasionally. Good masculine companionship once in a while helps a

husband to be more of a man. This gives him more confidence and more of a release for a particular part of his nature that ought to be expressed with other men.

But if a husband is always playing cards, basketball, baseball, or pool with other men--or away from home trying to make it big on the job--then this takes him mentally, emotionally and physically away from his wife and children. A continuing practice of this is wrong! It is breaking the commandment of Christ that a man is to cleave to his wife.

Every married man has the God-given responsibility to spend time at home with his wife and children. Is this where a considerable amount of your time and interest lies? Or is it always somewhere else, doing something else?

Where is your "heart"? How and where do you spend your time? Spend time alone with your mate.

Husbands and wives need special time together--sometimes apart even from the children. Get a babysitter, if you can, and go out to dinner or to a concert once in a while. You can walk, hand in hand, as you used to do when you were courting and dating--dance together, talk together and love together.

You can even take short trips together. Then you will appreciate the children more, because you've been away from them for a few days (not several weeks or months) perhaps once or twice a year. This doesn't hurt them at all, if they are properly trained and your family is emotionally close as it should be.

Look at some examples in the Bible. You'll find that men like Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were away from their children far more than many of us today. It's a matter of correctly training the children while you're with them, and giving them a stable atmosphere and foundation for the remainder of their lives.

Of course, many don't have much opportunity to go someplace together, or can't afford it. But there are other ways you can be alone together. You can begin by sending the children to bed by eight or eight-thirty in the evening. Then you will have an hour and a half or two hours together--before you go to bed.

You can listen to music together, read the Bible together occasionally, and do other things together. Sometimes you can have a babysitter watch the children while you and your wife take a long walk together. A little thoughtfulness and tenderness can help a great deal!

Many of you men who have marriage problems should court your wife as you used to. Practice the art of trying to cleave to her, and spend time together. Then you will really understand your wife, and she will feel close to you mentally and emotionally. Both of you will have more of the mutual understanding and affection you used to have when you were first married.

But you do need to communicate in all those activities! Remember, love does not automatically make one a skilled mind reader.

Men, be sure you don't let other things distract you--or create situations which excuse you--from talking openly and genuinely with your mate about your deepest interests and concerns in life. Let her know if you think something is missing in your

relationship. And truly listen to her with your heart as well as your head when she talks to you about similar matters.

If you love your mate, tell him or her--say it frequently. Open up. If you share your hopes and dreams with the love of your life, then your love will grow deeper and be even more meaningful(How to Have a Joyous Marriage, p.6-9).

Dr Dobson gives us these helpful insights on better managing our time in marriage so we can spend more time with our spouse:

Most Americans maintain a “priority list” of things to purchase when enough money has been saved for that purpose. They plan ahead to reupholster the sofa or carpet the dining room floor or buy a newer car.

However, it is my conviction that domestic help for the mother of small children should appear on that priority list too. Without it, she is sentenced to the same responsibility day in and day out, seven days a week. For several years, she is unable to escape the unending burden of dirty diapers, runny noses and unwashed dishes.

It is my belief that she will do a more efficient job in those tasks and be a better mother if she can share that load occasionally. More explicitly, I feel she should get out of the house completely for one day, doing something for sheer enjoyment. This seems more important to the happiness of the home than buying new drapes or a power saw for Dad...

Husbands and wives should constantly guard against the scourge of overcommitment. Even worthwhile and enjoyable activities become damaging when they consume the last ounce of energy or the remaining free moments in the day. Though it is rarely possible for a busy family, everyone needs to waste some time every now and then – to walk along kicking rocks and thinking pleasant thoughts. Men need time to putter in the garage and women need to pluck their eyebrows and do girly things again. But as I have described, the whole world seems to conspire against such reconstructive activities. Even our vacations are hectic: “We have to reach St Louis by sundown or we’ll lose our reservations.”

I can provide a simple prescription for a happier, healthier life but it must be implemented by the individual family. You must resolve to slow your pace, you learn to say no gracefully; you must resist the temptation to chase after more pleasures, more hobbies, more social entanglements; you must hold the line with the tenacity of a tackle for a professional football team, blocking out the intruders and defending the home team.

In essence, three questions should be asked about every new activity which presents itself: Is it worthy of our time? What will be eliminated if it is added? What will be its impact on our family life? My suspicion is that most of the items in our busy day would score rather poorly on this three item test (What Wives Wish Their Husbands Knew About Women, p.53-54).

4) MARRIAGE MEANS GIVING

Marriage is one of the best training grounds to learn what giving is all about. From the independence of being single we move into a phase in our life where we are a part of a partnership requiring us to be balanced with the principles of give and take and a willingness to compromise when needed.

Dr Meredith has these words to say about this important point:

One of the greatest joys in life that everyone ought to experience is the joy of giving: is seeing the deep appreciation, the radiant smiles and the joy of others because you thought of them.

The Apostle Paul wrote, "I have shown in every way, by laboring like this, that you must support the weak. And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive'" (Acts 20:35).

Marriage is certainly one of the best places to learn to give. For when you are constantly living with another person, when you are bound by God in marriage to that person, you desperately need to learn to give and give and give in order for that union to be as deeply happy and satisfying as it should be!

As the one God intended to take the lead, a husband ought to take the lead in creating, in marriage, an atmosphere of giving and serving. Then the wife should surely follow this lead so that each party is trying to give a wonderful life and marriage to the other, to enrich their partner's life in every possible way. Otherwise, if both partners are immature, selfish and just trying to "get", then big trouble lies ahead!

You husbands especially need to remember that Christ gave Himself for the Church: "That He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loves his wife loves himself" (Ephesians 5:26-28) Authorized (King James) Version.

Every right-minded man certainly desires to cherish and protect his wife. She is his sweetheart, his companion, the mother of his children. He ought to realize that she is part of him! "For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church" (verse 29).

Realizing that his wife is part of him, a man certainly ought to have a solicitous and protective feeling toward his wife and sweetheart. He should constantly be thinking of her welfare so that she does not strain or overdo; so that her grace and beauty may be preserved throughout all of their married life. A real man will notice when his wife is overworking and lighten her burdens whenever possible. He will leap to action to lift heavy things for her, scrub those burnt pans or vacuum for her when she is tired or over worked. He will help her when she is sick, and protectively and lovingly watch over her in many such ways!

Of course, a man should not do this because he is nagged or henpecked into doing it! And no right-minded wife would knowingly do this. If a wife makes demands beyond reason upon her husband, it is his duty as the family's leader to set his foot down and

restore a proper balance in their relationship--though, as much as possible, he still helps her out in sincere love and concern for their life together. The woman also has her responsibilities, her particular duties in the household, and she should gladly do them. But, help from her husband comes in as an act of love--freely and fully given when she is sick, downcast or is suddenly faced with an object too heavy to lift, a job too difficult for her to accomplish without the physically stronger partner of the marriage giving of his help and strength in love to his wife and sweetheart.

Learn this lesson, men! Your wives will repay you in a thousand ways over the years to come if you learn to give this help when it is needed--and give it freely and in kindness.

Certainly every Christian woman ought to think about serving her husband--about caring for his health and personal needs, about encouraging him, loving him and helping him grow as a husband and father in every way she can.

One of the great tragedies of our inflationary society is that millions of young wives are virtually forced to work outside the home! Often, they come home tired and bedraggled at night. A wife in this situation lacks the zest and energy to cook special meals, keep the house as she would wish to--let alone be an enthusiastic sweetheart, companion and lover for her husband.

Each of you who read this need to meditate deeply about the quality of life you desire. Think carefully about building a real family with children--and a wife that is able to stay home and rear that family as our Creator certainly intended!

The apostle Paul was inspired to instruct the older women: "That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, To be discrete, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed" (Titus 2:4-5) Authorized (King James) Version.

As Proverbs 31 tells us, a woman like this who gives herself to her family, to building a real home--will indeed be honored both by God and by man. "Her children rise up and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her" (Proverbs 31:28).

If you can use your marriage and your family as a "training ground," to unreservedly love, share and give to others, you will develop the greatest characteristic of all. Then, from a strong, happy marriage as a base of strength, that love can flow out from you and your mate to the rest of your family, friends, neighbors and associates. In every aspect of your married life, learn to practice the way of give. You will not be sorry(How to Have a Joyous Marriage, p.11-14).

Gavin Reid makes the following comments about self-centredness in marriage:

Marriage asks a great deal of us. It also asks that we live unselfishly for the sake of another person. That is a tall order! If you stand back and look at the history of the Human race you will see that the factor that has marred peace on earth more than anything else is human selfishness. The old prophet's words in the Bible (Isaiah 53) were surely on target: "All of us were like sheep that were lost, each of us going his own way"...

We all like to please ourselves. For much of our lives we can stumble along like this but in marriage the crunch comes quickly. Love is about wanting the best for the other person. Most of our pop-songs speak of love as if it were a self-centred feeling which is more about getting than giving. But if two people living under the same roof are only thinking about themselves, then trouble will not be far away.

Sometimes the man wants to keep on all his old habits, friends and activities. He may be a keen sportsman or he may have some time-consuming hobby, and cannot see any problem in leaving his new wife at home in the evenings or at weekends, while he goes off with his friends as he always used to. If the interest is not shared it is selfish behaviour and will cause pain. On the other hand the girl can also find herself spending large amounts of time away from her husband. Sometimes the mother-daughter relationship is a very close and precious one. In itself, of course, this is fine. The danger, however, is the 'running back to mother' business. It is more than an old comedian's joke. It really does happen and the husband can feel that he takes second place to the wife's family.

Again when it comes to lovemaking, the husband can often be insensitive to the fact that his wife is overtired or at a time in her monthly cycle when she does not feel 'in the mood'. To insist on intercourse would be a very unloving action. It can sometimes happen the other way around when a tired husband who is worried about things at work just cannot feel relaxed enough to make love. A bit of 'tender loving care' is what is needed and jokes about impotence are never jokes.

A crucial time to watch in a marriage is when there are very young children in the home. This means that constant supervision is needed. The degree of dependence of a very young child upon a parent's care is quite awe-inspiring. And so often this is where the husband lets his wife down. This certainly happened with me. I would come home at the end of an interesting day when I had met interesting people. I would find my wife had a meal ready (which was often a near-miraculous achievement on her part!) After tea I would probably do my good deed for the day and wash up, but she would face the bathing and bedding of three very lively children. I might 'help' by walking around issuing orders about 'time for bed now' and sometimes I might read a bed-time story. However, if the phone rang and some friend wanted to see me, the chances were that I would dash off without a thought.

And even when I pulled my weight in getting the family bedded down, I can remember the many times when I would be out for the rest of the evening leaving you-know-who to baby-sit. I can still remember one night when I arrived late from a pleasant evening's chat with a friend to find a very angry and resentful wife. And I was so surprised that she felt resentful!

In many ways I think my wife complained too little in those early days. If I had only woken up to my selfishness earlier she might have been spared the time, about ten years after we married, when she was hit by nervous exhaustion and became ill.

One thing I learned too late in all this was how much a home with young children can become a prison for the mother. She needs to get out. She needs to meet other people. And the people she needs to meet should include other men. So often the way things work out for young mums is that the only people they see are other young mums(Starting Out Together, p.81-83).

Joyce Huggett offers us the following comments on giving in marriage:

When a relationship is characterised by kindness, encouragement and challenge, both partners should grow as a result of the love poured forth. Kindness is the caring which wants to communicate, 'I am all for you.' Encouragement is the quality which draws out the full potential in another, gently urging, 'You can do it.' And challenge is the love which persuades a person to reach beyond his/her old limitations. I am not talking here about sexual love, but the love which enables the loved one to rise above a fear, to turn away from the sin of bitterness, jealousy or resentment, or to break other self-destructive habits. Are you contributing to your friend's growth in this way?...

Paul Tournier summarises the problem: 'Marriage is not just a question of sex. It is also a school for self-forgetting.' And who wants to forget 'number one'? Who wants to sacrifice selfish desires? That is the last thing most people want. And so, while the rewards of marriage attract, its demands repel.

Marriage is offensive to some because it requires complete renunciation of personal independence. But independence and self-actualization are twentieth-century gods. We are instructed to worship them. What then is to happen?

What does happen is catastrophic. People use marriage as a means of self-discovery: 'The intimacy of the marital relationship and the joys of parenthood will draw out my full potential, to help me to discover who I am.' But this attitude imperils a relationship which demands the abandonment of purely personal goals, ambitions and satisfaction. This attitude results in disillusionment. It is as Jesus warned, 'Whoever wants to save his life will lose it' (Luke 9:24).

Then what is to happen? Marriage must be viewed as the 'school of self-sacrifice' and a paradox must be recognised. It is those who allow their needs and concerns to be swallowed up in an enterprise which rises above selfish desires who discover the meaning of life, the truth about themselves and the rewards of marriage. Those who actively pursue self-satisfaction rarely find it. When the limitations of marriage are accepted, when we resist fretting about 'me' and 'my needs', a miracle takes place.

At least, that is how it has been for us. When we least sought them, personal growth, fulfillment and emotional wholeness began to creep up on us. They came to stay. They arrived as a gift from God.

This wholeness is a gift we offer to the other. It is not something we grab for ourselves. That is why marriage chafes. The point is that the reason for living changes course when we marry. If I choose to marry, I decide to renounce my right to happiness, usefulness and comfort. Instead, I adopt a new set of priorities. These priorities insist that, from now on, I will seek to give love to my partner. I will make the other happy.

Do you feel called to the vocation of marriage with this partner?
Are you prepared for the re-orientation of priorities which this vocation demands?
What sacrifices are you prepared to make to ensure that your love works?(Growing Into Love, p.24-25)"

Josh McDowell offers the following thoughts about the link between our own selfishness and response to authority in our lives:

If you are the kind of person who always has to have his own way—who rebelled against parents, employers, or teachers—you will have a difficult time developing a close and intimate relationship. The individual who habitually rejects authority will find it difficult to respond to his or her mate in a positive way.

In a marriage, two people come together from different backgrounds and with different habits. They have different likes and dislikes. They purpose to make a union which is first a strong marriage bond and later a strong family bond. Because few of life's assignments require more flexibility than marriage, a proper response to authority is essential. If one of the partners has not learned this response, the conflict will be accentuated...

If you have learned to not always have it your way, you are better able to respond to your mate in marriage...(p.157-158)

In Pitfalls of Romantic Love, author H. G. Zerof asks, "How important is being right to you? Have you learned to allow your companion his or her feelings, even though you disagree, perhaps even violently, with the opinion expressed?"

The beauty of each partner responding to the desires and needs of the loved one is seen in the resulting- healthy give-and-take relationship so necessary for finding fulfillment in love, marriage, and sex. And the key to developing this give-and-take relationship is sensitivity and a willingness to compromise (The Secret of Loving, p.161).

One aspect of giving to our spouse has to do with giving honour and respect. Josh McDowell offers the following comments about the power of adoration:

My wife thinks I'm a king. She thinks I am the best speaker, the best husband, and the best father in the world. Do you know how that affects me? It motivates me to be all that I should be in my relationship with my wife. There is something about the respect she shows me that gives me the desire to become the kind of person others would want me to be. Respect preserves the integrity of the relationship because it creates the desire to protect not only the other person from outside pressures, but the relationship as well. Mutual respect and reverence will take a couple through a lot of hard times and protect against all types of onslaughts on the relationship (The Secret of Loving, p.268).

I'd like to quote again from Donald Schroeder's excellent article, "When Marriages Go Sour...Attitudes That Sweeten" and look at what he has to say about this point of giving in marriage:

Give Honor and Respect

It may seem difficult at times of heated differences of views or opinions, but again, every human wants to be shown honor and respect. Differences of opinion are not an excuse to drop respect. What happens when husbands and wives fail to show respect and honor to each other - or to any other person? An automatic wall of suspicion is created. Others are more easily hurt, more touchy, when we must point out their mistakes. They are less receptive to even constructive correction.

Many disrespected, unappreciated persons start imagining wrongs and insults when none are intended or exist. God commands us in all of our human relationships, "Honour all men"(2 Pet. 2:17). Yes, even if a person does not always express right character!

Why? Because respect breeds respect! Disrespect inflames bad feelings. It makes a good situation bad and a bad situation worse.

Remember, your mate is a person who willingly gave up many personal options and freedoms to marry you. Have you shown honor and respect to your mate for taking on the challenge of marriage and family responsibilities? Or living with all your imperfections? Treat your mate with dignity and, chances are, he or she will want to rise to a higher level of respect for you.

Be Helpful and Constructive

One of the United States' leading divorce and family law attorneys was asked what is the single biggest reason couples split up. He said, "No. 1 is the inability to talk honestly with each other, bare their souls and treat each other as their best friend."

You want your feelings, needs and opinions to be heard and considered? So does your mate! Many mates develop the habit of putting down their mate's feelings, opinions and desires. But how do you stop this vicious, degrading and damaging cycle? Quietly sit down together. Make outgoing love your aim.

"Love is kind," reveals I Corinthians 13:4 (RSV). The J.B. Phillips translation makes it even clearer: "Love...looks for a way of being constructive." Be constructive. Work on a positive solution to a problem instead of destroying or putting down your mate when a problem arises. Talk, listen to your mate. "Love does not insist on its own way" (I Cor. 13:5, RSV). "Be swift to hear, slow to speak," commands scripture (James 1:19). How often do mates cause enormous marital problems because they disobey this command?

"A soft answer turneth away wrath; but grievous words stir up anger" admonishes Proverbs 15:1. Next time, before being so quick to lash back or respond to a mate, stop. Ask yourself, "Is what I'm going to say helpful and constructive to solving the problem, or am I really trying to get back and put him/her down?"

When a mate tries to be positive and constructive about the situation, it encourages the other mate to do the same. But whatever steps you take, don't forget to strive to apply the attitudes that help and heal in marriage!

"We're a Team!"

A healthy, loving husband-wife relationship is not a master-slave relationship. It is not a mother-son or father-daughter relationship. It is a sharing, complementing relationship where each mate recognizes the God-ordained role of the other and contributes talents and energies for the good of the marriage. It is a union in which each mate expresses appreciation of the other's contribution.

Lasting marital happiness requires team effort. One of the newer tragic trends is the growing concept or pressure to go your own way - or, as some express it, "do your own thing" or "find yourself" - even if it means forsaking a mate, children or family responsibilities. It's when two mates realize they need, help and complement each other that they draw close and grow to respect and love each other. The Chinese have a saying that describes it, "One hand washes the other." What a wonderful, healing attitude to have in marriage! "My love, we're a team-to share the joys of life together, to conquer the difficulties and challenges of life together!"(How to Have a Happy Marriage, p.19-22)

I'd like to quote again from Josh McDowell's book "The Secret of Loving" for his comments on giving in marriage:

How do you spell love? How would you define the attitude of a person truly in love? When people ask me to define love, I reply that when you reach the point where the happiness, security, and development of another person is as much of a driving force to you as your own happiness, security, and development, then you have a mature love.

True love is spelled G-I-V-E. It is not based on what you can get, but rooted in what you can give to the other person...

I believe we could solve a majority of the problems plaguing the world today if we could only develop an attitude of self-giving, of putting someone else's needs first. Nearly all marriage and family relationships could be healed by a simple but profound change in our attitudes...

When your love is mature, you will be concerned not only about having your needs met. You'll be equally intent on fulfilling those of the other person. And whenever those needs seem in conflict with yours, mature love does not have to flip a coin to decide whose needs will be taken care of first. Mature love desires to reach out to the other person first. You will find that the needs of the other person are more important to you than your own...

Your love is mature when you care more about the relationship and the other person than your own desires. It is mature when common goals and values become a priority with both of you and when winning and proving yourself right cease to be important(The Secret of Loving, p.260)

To conclude this point of giving in marriage I'd like to quote from Alan Loy McGuinness's book "The Romance Factor:

What we are talking about, of course, is the heart of love - a desire to make another happy. It is the surest sign that you are in love when you find yourself planning and scheming ways to bring happiness to another. It is well illustrated by a man who had fallen newly in love with a golden woman who was an ex-cheerleader and from whom emanated an energetic, moving, sensual allure. He said to me, "In my fantasies about her, it's not so much sex with her that I long for, although that's certainly part of it. More than anything else, it's a desire to make her happy. I fantasize about strolling down Fifth Avenue with her on a fall day, buying a hot pretzel from a vendor, and then seeing the delight in her face as she eats it. That's love for me—doing things that would make her happy."

Most people who have been soundly in love have had that overpowering desire to make the beloved happy, even if it requires some sacrifice. The sacrifice does not seem to matter, because they are getting their happiness from seeing the pleasure of the people they love. When this happens in your own relationship, you have experienced not only one of the greatest ecstasies possible in this life, but also a perfect example of the Christian ethic at work. You have transcended yourself (p.113).

5) BE FORGIVING

Conflict is inevitable in any marriage. Without the quality of forgiveness any such relationship is doomed to fail! That is just how important forgiveness is.

With his comments I'd like to quote again from Dr Meredith:

To be happy and remain happy in marriage, you must not only give but also forgive. There have never been two perfect people on earth, and so no marriage has ever been truly perfect--as all long-married people understand.

You knew full well when you married that your husband or wife was not perfect. So you must not hold them up to some unreasonable standard of perfection. If you do, you will both be perfectly miserable.

When there are real misunderstandings and hurts--and there will be--you must learn to forgive. As a real Christian, you are commanded to forgive all men--so how much more your own mate!

Jesus Christ, the One who shed His blood for us, stated, "For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" (Matthew 6:14-15).

You must ask God in prayer to grant you the spirit of forgiveness--the ability to completely put away all resentment and animosity against others who have hurt you. And then you need to practice this. Do it regularly. Build the habit of forgiving others quickly, especially your own mate!

There are those who carry grudges. They often brood and fume and smolder over little hurts and misunderstandings. Are you like this?

If you are, you need to pray to God in heaven to help you get over this tendency--and to completely forgive your mate for the literally dozens of little hurts that can occur when two people live together.

Do you really enjoy making yourself miserable, your mate miserable and everyone else miserable by carrying grudges around forever? If you really think about it, very few of us really want this result. So work on it.

Change your pattern of thinking. Don't allow yourself to get hurt so easily. Pray your heart out to God who is called "the Father of mercies" (II Corinthians 1:3). As He forgives us again and again, so must we forgive others--including our mates.

The apostle Peter commands Christian men to honor their wives, "as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered" (I Peter 3:7). Peter then proceeds to give instructions that apply to all situations, but especially the "marriage situation":

Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous; not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing (verses 8-9).

Yes, we need to have compassion for our mates and forgive them regularly. We need to be courteous and tenderhearted in marriage. For marriage is a wonderful workshop for learning the art of giving, forgiving, kindness and mercy--if we will prayerfully and unselfishly use it to help us build these qualities into our character.

The apostle Peter asked Jesus, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?" (Matthew 18:21). Think about it! Sometimes your mate will offend you (though you probably shouldn't be so sensitive!) many times in one day!

Jesus understood. He knew that we all need forgiveness from God and from each other again and again. So Jesus answered, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven" (verse 22). So love your mate. Forgive your mate. Don't carry grudges.

Remember how difficult it must be for him or her to live with you! If you were someone else, how would you like to have to put up with all the mistakes and foibles that you exhibit almost every week of your life? Remind yourself that you cannot be happy "hating" your mate. Learn to genuinely forgive, forget and move forward to a truly joyous and satisfying life (How to Have a Joyous Marriage, p.15-17).

Josh McDowell offers these comments on the importance of forgiveness in marriage:

Forgiveness is the oil of relationships. It reduces the friction and allows people to come close to one another. If you do not believe another individual is a forgiving person, you can never be truly open and vulnerable to him or her...

Forgiveness when regularly practiced in marriage, however, leads to increased intimacy because it spawns open communication. If someone loves you despite your faults and accepts you even after you've wronged them, you can't help but respond to that person with an even deeper love (The Secret of Loving, p.122-123)

6) ROMANCE AND FUN

Are you enjoying or enduring your marriage? To be able to enjoy your marriage and stick with it there must be plenty of romance and fun to help keep it going.

Dr Meredith makes these comments on the importance of romance and fun in your marriage:

Most courtships and marriages begin with romance and fun. The young couple spends a lot of time together. They go to the beach, the mountains or the park. They eat together. They go out dancing, or to the museum, libraries or movies. Above all, they have long, intimate talks with each other--looking into each other's eyes, exulting in the romance of love. And they have fun.

In most cases, they laugh and kiss and kid around and really enjoy the getting-to-know-you stage of courtship. Life takes on a special glow because of their attraction to each other--and because they are using that attraction to enhance and make special the sharing of all their activities and intimate moments together.

But all too often--a few weeks or months after the marriage--this fun and romance begins to leave the marriage. Often, life becomes hum-drum and dull and one or both marriage partners start asking themselves, "What went wrong?" Why?

There are often a number of reasons, of course, but let's discuss two of the most common reasons why a marriage loses its romance and zest.

First, the man may begin very quickly to take his wife for granted. Instead of continuing to court her as she had been used to, he now very seldom takes her out, very seldom has long, intimate talks with her, very seldom whispers "sweet nothings" in her ear.

Often, after marriage, the man buries himself in his career. And, after work, he may simply plop himself in front of the television and proclaim that he is too tired to go out, or to have friends over, or even to have a long walk, or talk with his wife.

Instead of this, a man needs to treat his wife as a sweetheart. He needs to cultivate and build an atmosphere of love, romance and intimacy in their home--kissing his wife when he returns from work, holding her hand as they are taking walks, and embracing her often throughout the day with free and lavish affection.

True love certainly involves deep and abiding respect. A man ought to be grateful and thankful that the woman who is his wife has decided to leave her own estate and cleave to him above all others unto death. He ought to appreciate that fact--and the many, many good qualities of help, patience and service which practically every wife

possesses. He ought to encourage and bring out the best in her--not constantly harp and carp away at her in belittling criticism which only causes her, in most cases, to degenerate and respond in kind.

Men, if you will do this, most normal women will respond with love and appreciation. Your wife will want to be your sweetheart. She will be thrilled to be sincerely loved and appreciated, and will repay your love in a hundred different ways.

However, even if the man does his part, there is a second reason marriages lose their romantic bloom. This second reason most often involves the young wife virtually forsaking her responsibility to be her husband's sweetheart and companion - even though he is good to her. Why would any right-minded wife do a thing like that?

Well, it's a long story. It involves a quirk of the female mind that most men simply cannot understand. And the very women who exhibit this mental quirk don't totally understand it either. They can't explain it rationally, because it is, in fact, totally irrational. Let me explain.

Remember, in the beginning, God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him" (Genesis 2:18, New International Version).

From the very beginning, then, the woman was created by God to be a "helper" for the man. In the New Testament, God tells us, "For man is not from woman, but woman from man. Nor was man created for the woman, but woman for the man" (I Corinthians 11:8-9).

And in the book of Ephesians we read these inspired instructions, "Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body" (Ephesians 5:22-23).

In spite of all these and many other similar instructions in God's inspired Word, many professing Christian wives manage, nevertheless, to evade this God-given responsibility. They will not truly submit to their husband's leadership in the family. They will not put him first in their lives.

They somehow continue to put first their job, or keeping their house so perfect that they are mostly "too tired"--too tired to go out with their husbands, too tired for romance or sex--"too tired," in other words, to be the fun-loving, sweetheart, companion and lover that they portrayed themselves to be during their courtship.

In a similar vein, other wives end up "worshipping" their own children and putting those children way ahead of the very father who begot them! Because of this veritable "worship" of their own offspring, they also are "too tired" to be the sweetheart and lover their husband genuinely needs. Often, they will even refuse to go out alone with or go on a trip alone with him because of the children!

The poor young husband is caught "between a rock and a hard place"! He loves his wife (at least for a while), and he loves the children. But because of the wife's incredible selfishness and ignorance, she ends up depriving him of the very reason he married her in the first place--love, romance, fun and adult female companionship.

Listen, young wives! Remember that your husband came before the children. If you treat him correctly, he should be around as your companion, protector and provider long after the children have grown and gone.

So, put your husband first in your family relationship, and expect him to do the same with you as already explained earlier in this booklet. Don't "worship" your own careers, your house or your children. Do not put them ahead of your husband! That is unscriptural and wrong!

This kind of behavior can wreck and ruin the love and romance that built your marriage in the first place. It can drive your husband into the arms of another woman as fast as anything I know!

Wake up! Put forth time and effort to be with your husband, to respond to his interests, to return his affection and to encourage and inspire him in every way you can. Within God's laws, try every way you can to make his life happy. Smile at him, laugh with him, kiss him back passionately and make him feel like he is ten feet tall!

Then, "your" man--if he is normal--will deeply appreciate the fact that he married you, will cherish you as his wife, will work even harder to provide for you and the children, and will certainly try to accommodate any genuine needs you have. He will spend more time with the children when they are very young, or sick, or have some special needs.

Both of you, husbands and wives, need to strive to keep the romantic "fires" always burning brightly in your marriages. For the special joy that flows from two people who are deeply in love, still romantically enraptured with each other, and sincerely involved in giving a wonderful marriage to each other--this is indeed a joy to behold! (How to Have a Joyous Marriage, p.17-22).

In his article "Five Ways to Love Your Mate" Earl Williams offers the following comments about romance in marriage.

Lovers Are Romantic

Eros is the word used in Greek literature to describe romantic love. It is the love about which ballads and poems are written. Eros is the love that can light up your marriage and take it from boring, black-and-white silence to technicolor 3D, 50-mm excitement, in Dolby sound. Here, then, is the fourth major area in loving your mate.

You may be thinking, Romance is just a Hollywood production—surely God doesn't want us involved with that mushy stuff. Well, here's news for you—good news for your marriage. Eros—romance—is real.

God inspired a whole book of the Bible, the Song of Solomon, to describe the proper kind of romantic love in marriage.

The Bible also describes the love Jacob had for Rachel: "So Jacob served seven years for Rachel, and they seemed but a few days to him because of the love he had for her" (Gen. 29:20). Only romantic love could make seven years seem like a few days. Jacob was euphoric—on cloud nine. He was high on eros.

Yes, romantic love is real, and you really need to give it to your mate. In many cases, wives have little trouble understanding eros. Quite often, they are starving for romance. Husbands tend to ignore romance, and do not fulfill their wives' needs. Wives desire romance. Romance must come before sex.

God wants you to give the pleasure of romantic love to your mate. Are you a fighter or a lover? If you have not been giving romantic love, you probably have been fighting. Now is the time to become a lover, not a fighter.

There are three keys to developing romantic love: climate, imagination and surrender.

The Climate for Romantic Love

The climate in which romance is given is important. Eros is emotional and sensitive and requires a warm climate to flourish.

Project a warm, positive attitude toward your mate. Ask God to help you remove any negative feelings you may have had in the past (Eph. 4:31-32). You are making a new beginning in your relationship. Your giving of kindness will go a long way in producing a warm climate for romance.

Decor, a lover's grooming, is an important part of the romantic climate. Since eros is sensitive to sight and scent, your grooming or the lack of it can turn your mate on or off.

Be clean. If you want to get next to your mate, make sure you are tidy. Wives, keep your hair neat and pretty. Husbands, shave those whiskers. It is difficult to go cheek to cheek with a cactus. Exercise personal hygiene and also use a little cologne or perfume to spice things up.

Dress neatly, even around the house. Wives, dress as appealingly as possible for your husbands. Husbands, dress to please your wives. Find out what your mate likes to see you in; then aim to please.

The "look of love" produces a romantic climate. Solomon spoke of the power of romantic eye contact when he wrote, "You have made my heart beat faster with a single glance of your eyes" (Song of Sol. 4:9, New American Standard Bible).

Couples who are in love look at one another often. It has been said that "the eye is the mirror of the soul." It is also true that the eye is the mirror of love. Create a romantic climate with your mate through eye contact. Look warmly into your mate's eyes when you talk. In public situations, occasionally look for your mate, catch his or her eye and smile or wink. You will be sending the message "I love you" from your eyes to your mate's heart.

Nothing warms the romantic climate like the giving of affection. Our generation has been stripped of its "natural affection" (II Tim. 3:3, Authorized Version). We have become cold and aloof, even in our marriages. Take your marriage out of the ice age by giving warm affection to your mate.

Kissing has always been a symbol of affection and warmth. You should make kissing the official form of greeting your mate. A kiss in the morning is a pleasant way to start the day. Kisses through the day are an excellent way to sustain your mate's affection.

Solomon's bride desired his kisses: "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth—for your love is better than wine" (Song of Sol. 1:2). As wine makes the heart merry, so do the kisses of romantic love. Little things mean a lot.

In no other area of marriage can so little mean so much as in romance. Have you stopped doing the little things? Now is the time to start anew.

Use Imagination

Romance is all in the mind! The imaginings of your mind can be a powerful tool in becoming more romantic toward your mate. Solomon said we are what we think (Prov. 23:7). If you think romantically you will act romantically.

Jesus Christ, of course, spoke of the sinful effects on the mind that lusting after a person who is not your mate will have (Matt. 5:28). But have you ever thought about the other side of this scripture? Usually for every good there is evil and for every evil there is good. It is obviously wrong to have lustful thoughts about someone else's mate, but it is good to have thoughts of desire toward your own mate. God told Eve that her "desire" would be toward her husband, and the same applied to Adam (Gen. 3:16).

Solomon instructs us to use our minds in this way: "Drink water from your own cistern, and running water from your own well...As a loving deer and a graceful doe, let her breasts satisfy you at all times; and always be enraptured with her love" (Prov. 5:15, 19). Even when your mate is out of sight, never let him or her be out of mind. Use your heart and imagination to create positive, pleasing thoughts about your mate (Phil. 4:8).

Think about your mate's attractive qualities. Hear his or her warm and reassuring voice. See that beautiful smile. Take mental stock of your mate's inner and outer beauty. Proverbs 29:18, Authorized Version, says, "Where there is no vision, the people perish." We can also say that where there is no vision, there is no romance.

Launch yourself into the future through your imagination. Think about how you will be romantic with your mate when you are together again. Visualize warm and thrilling romantic situations where you are actively giving love to your mate. If you use your mind and imagination, your thoughts will reinforce your feelings and actions of romantic love.

Surrender

Surrender is another key to developing romantic love. You must surrender and give this type of love to your mate. We have seen that eros—romantic love—is real, and the need for it to be revived in your marriage has been made clear. You have been equipped with the principles and applications of romantic love. Now it is up to you.

Do not grieve the spirit of eros. Do not withhold the romantic love your mate so desperately needs from you. Add another point to your LQ (Love Quotient). Surrender and let love flow!

Lovers Are Lovers

The fifth way to love your mate is with sexual love. How is your love life? God intended it to be pleasurable. You and your mate have the capacity to reach that high

level of sexual enjoyment. Even if your sex life has been unfulfilling, you can change it for the better.

The place to start improving your sex life is with the application and giving of the other four loves. Sexual love has been placed last in this series of points because its success is dependent on the other areas. If you are to improve your sex life, first improve the rest of your marriage.

The prudish, Victorian approach to sex as being one of the necessary evils of life is wrong. The modern new morality is also wrong. To properly give sexual love to your mate, you need God's positive attitude toward sex.

God created sex, and He says that it is good in marriage (Gen.1:27-28,31). God inspired Paul to write, "Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge" (Heb. 13:4).

For "bed" Paul used the Greek word *kaite*, which literally means cohabitation or coitus. The translators of the Authorized Version of the Bible were ashamed to use the word coitus, so they used bed, and the Revised Authorized Version perpetuates this translation. But God is not ashamed of this beautiful act of love. Neither were Adam and Eve, before Satan got to them in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 2:25).

You have a God-given responsibility to give sexual love and satisfaction to your mate. God commands husbands and wives to satisfy one another's sexual needs: "Let the husband fulfill his duty to his wife, and likewise also the wife to her husband" (1 Cor. 7:3, NASB).

Your body actually belongs to your mate, and your mate's body is yours (verse 4). With that authority comes the responsibility to take care of your mate's body as if it were your own (Eph. 5:28). Never abuse your mate's body. Handle it with tender, loving care. You should never refuse to give sexual love to your mate or use it as a weapon or for leverage (1 Cor. 7:5).

What is your LQ? After studying these five ways to love your mate, your love quotient should be five points higher. If you give these loves, your marriage will become more contented and pleasurable.

Finally, listen to God's admonishment: "Live joyfully with the wife whom you love all the days of your vain life which He has given you under the sun...for that is your portion in life, and in the labor which you perform under the sun" (Eccl. 9:9, RAV) (WCG brochure; Love, Marriage and Sex, p.13-14).

In his excellent book "The Romance Factor", Alan Loy McGuinness offers these helpful tips towards building more love and romance into your marriage:

1. Confident lovers use their eyes to attract. Watch any pair of lovers in a restaurant. There can be an awesome exchange of energy with the use of their eyes. All our talk about erogenous zones and the sex organs neglects one of the most powerful organs of all—the eyes. "You have ravished my heart with a glance of your eyes," the Song of Solomon cried thousands of years ago. And the people who follow you with their eyes, who look intently into your face, are still hard to resist. Studies

show that if you hold another's gaze for only two seconds longer than normal, you have given a clear sign of interest...

2. Confident lovers turn up their energy level. Anyone who has good results with the other sex knows how this approach works. A woman explained how she attracts men: "I'm not brazen about it, but if I want to get a man interested in me, I don't try to parade in front of him, or do any of the preening rituals that some people try. I just turn up the energy level. And I focus on him. I forget how I may be coming across to him. In fact, I stop thinking about myself altogether, and I concentrate all my attention on him. Maybe it shows in the way I'm looking at him or the way I'm talking—I don't know. All I know is that it works."

3. Confident lovers touch freely. Wonderful amounts of sexuality can be communicated with a light caress or a brush against someone's hair. The tactile organs can, if used correctly, build an emotional crescendo. Sensuality is a matter, of attentiveness, of opening yourself to the marvelous sensations available to our bodies...

Touching your mate as if you were absent-mindedly patting the dog is worse than not touching at all. Many men complain that their wives are no longer sexy; but if they resensitized their fingers and began to caress the way they did while courting, they might turn their women into veritable courtesans.

4. Confident lovers seduce with talk...But far and away the biggest complaint, standing out in splendid isolation, is "We don't talk more." I know that we family therapists have advocated communication until it has become a clique but couples who keep romance alive always talk a lot. Communication is to love what blood is to the body. Without it, marriages simply cannot live.

One wife who reports that her husband still romances her says, "It's the talk that does it. He seems to love to sit with a cup of coffee and just talk with me. Most wives don't have husbands like that—they're always buried in the sports page. But Hank tells me things. He expresses how he's feeling, and he wants to know what's going on inside me. That feels good. When he travels on business, he calls and tells me how much he's hating it and that he feels bad being away. If he feels really bad, he sends flowers. But I like it better when he calls. A five-minute conversation before we each go to bed means more to me than five dozen roses" ...(p.22-24)

Research shows that there are several preconditions for ecstasy. In her excellent book *Ecstasy*, Marghanita Laski (who is not a psychologist at all, interestingly enough, but a novelist and literary critic) calls these preconditions "ecstatic triggers." These circumstances are not to be confused with the experience itself, because they frequently occur without bringing about any heightened awareness. But they happen so often in conjunction with peak experiences that they are important to examine. The most common triggers are:

- Art, especially music
- Natural scenery
- Play and rhythmic movement
- Religion
- Discovery of new knowledge
- Creative work
- Beauty

Childbirth Sexual love

One cannot help being struck by the frequency with which most couples combine these experiences when they fall in love...

Most expert lovers manage instinctively to employ nearly every one of these inductors to heighten the experience. That is, the pleasure resides not merely in the enjoyment of the beloved; it is enhanced by a host of ecstatic agents.

The lesson that awaits us in all this data is quite simple: most of us know how to create ecstasy and bring pleasure to our mates. We went to considerable lengths to fuse all the elements when we won our lovers. But most lovers who have been together a few years have become dangerously negligent in planning for the continuation of such joy...(p.45-46)

The experience of being known is equally ecstatic. Perhaps even more so. To have someone pressing to know you, someone who seems intensely interested in the things you are telling about yourself, is a powerful aphrodisiac. With such intense mutual penetration, it is small wonder that I lovers stay up all night, talking and touching...

The assumption is that there are always new rooms to explore. Unfortunately, in a marriage it is easy to stop looking for these new rooms after a few years, to ignore the subtle changes, and to assume that there is no more to know. When two people have eaten several thousand meals together and made love several hundred times, they naturally get lazy. But if we pay attention long enough to notice, there are always new things to discover about your lovers...(p.47-48)

Therapists often comment to such a couple that poor sex is a symptom of some deeper problems. Solve those, it is assumed, and the sex will take care of itself. But sex is too important a part of the marital mix to assume that it is merely a symptom and that it will take care of itself.

It is a basic building block for constructing and maintaining a happy marriage. A solid sexual relationship can keep a marriage together when lots of other things are shaky. And a seemingly smooth love relationship in which there is little sexual excitement can suddenly collapse.

Marabel Morgan, in her "Total Woman" classes, may advocate some rather outdated and manipulative techniques, but I like very much what she suggests about creating "supersex." Some readers guffaw at the suggestion that a wife meet her husband at the door some evening dressed in high heels and a babydoll pajama top, but I've never talked to a man who thought the idea was corny (as long as she got the kids out of the house first). And I've never met a man who objected to the "homework" assigned at the second session of Mrs. Morgan's classes: the women are to go home and make love to their husbands every night for a week.

One woman, on hearing that assignment, muttered audibly, "What do they think I am, a sex maniac?" Another woman, who tried it, said, "I attempted to follow the assignment this past week, but I just couldn't keep it up—I was only ready for sex six nights. Monday night I was just too tired." The teacher gave her a B. but her husband gave her an A!

And a Fort Lauderdale housewife told how she diligently prepared for love for seven straight nights, "whatever, whenever, and wherever," and it was her husband who cried uncle. "I don't know what's happened to you, honey," he said with a weak grin, "but I love it."

We need leisurely, playful, whole-bodied lovemaking, and it is sad to see couples shut down sexually because they have been hurt in some other area. Sex should not be a weapon...

As with the other triggers to ecstasy, the largest reason that people neglect sex as a vehicle for intimacy is a matter of time and priority. Husbands and wives see one another at the worst possible times of the day—a few minutes in the morning when they're pressured and trying to get on with their day, and in the evenings when they have no more to give and are irritable and exhausted. "There is nothing more certain to destroy a marriage," Dr. James Dobson contends, "than overcommitment and exhaustion. The breakneck pace squelches communication"...

According to one study, it is not just men in our society who complain that they'd like more sex. The pollsters found that only 4 percent of married women thought the frequency of intercourse was too high, and 38 percent—almost four wives in ten—said they'd like to make love more often...(p.49-51)

If you keep your machine finely tuned, your love life will be better both because the organism works better and because you will make your mate happier. The trouble with neglecting the body is that we are saying we do not care if our appearance displeases people who look at us everyday. It behooves us to do everything we can with diet, exercise, dress, and the help of professionals to be as attractive as possible. In this case, the motivation is not vanity or exhibitionism, so much as love (p.27)

On the topics of romance and sex in marriage Charlie Shedd in "Letters to Philip" offers the following thoughts for consideration:

Anticipation is a big item in the most vibrant marriages...Don't ever lose this "I can hardly wait to see you" spirit, which was such a big part of your life together before marriage.

Do you remember how it was when you came home from college? You drove right past our home and hurried on to see Marilyn. Those 24 extra miles (when you multiply by 2) meant a lot to her. They told her more than a thousand words. Your excitement kept her excited.

Too many couples let this get away. But this is unfortunate, because they have dropped one of the most certain ways to maintain the zest in their love life...(p.48)

Warning: Women resent compliments if the only ones they hear are sex gimmicks. Here are some proofs to the point:

"How can men be such unimaginative morons? The only time my husband tells me I'm nice is when he wants sex."..."Whenever he gets rhetorical, I know what's coming."..."He never flatters me unless we're in bed."..."My husband has a string of

what I call 'bedtime lyrics.' Just once I wish he would tell me I'm nice without an ulterior motive."

That sound you heard may be a snort from the grave of Casanova. No expert lover would make such stupid mistakes. Tell yourself repeatedly that you must avoid using anything that smacks of 'using' rather than loving. The surest safeguard, obviously, is to praise her biscuits and her housekeeping; how well she manages your money; how nice she looked at the party; the new apron she made and anything else you like about her.

Sex for a woman is one of those ultrasensitive things in which it is almost impossible to hide false motives. Therefore, if you want your sex life to rank with the best, you'd better keep checking to be sure that sincerity is a big part of the total relationship...(p.111-112)

Dr Hernandez commented further that men and women engage in sexual intercourse for reasons which God never intended. He listed a few of those illicit motives:

1. Sex is often permitted as a marital duty.
2. It is offered to repay or secure a favour.
3. It represents conquest or victory.
4. It stands as a substitute for verbal communication.
5. It is used to overcome feelings of inferiority (especially in men who seek proof of their masculinity).
6. It is an enticement for emotional love(especially by women who use their bodies to obtain masculine attention).
7. It is a defence against anxiety and tension.
8. It is provided or withheld in order to manipulate the partner.
9. It is engaged in for the purpose of bragging to others.

These "non-loving" reasons for participating in the sex act rob it of meaning and reduce it to an empty and frustrating social game. Sexual intercourse in marriage should bring pleasure, of course, but it should provide a method of communicating a very deep spiritual commitment. Women are much more sensitive to this need(p.123)

To conclude this point of developing romance and fun into your marriage I'd like to now quote from an excellent article by Ronald Kelly called "Keeping Romance Alive" that appeared in the Good News magazine (Jan-Feb.1988, p.14-17). Ron Kelly writes:

Keeping Romance Alive

To most people the word date means what you do before you get married. But the most important dating of all takes place after the wedding ceremony!

It's sad but true! After marrying, many couples settle into a predictable routine. The spark goes out of their relationship. The romance slowly fades.

In this series of articles on dating, we have shown how important dating is toward achieving a happy marriage. We have encouraged singles to spend time getting sufficiently acquainted— to be thoroughly prepared for marriage.

But the dating years before marriage are comparatively short-lived—typically from about age 16 to 25. One may date a prospective mate two or three years. But marriage ought to last 50 years or more —till death do you part. How much more important, then, is dating after marriage. Yet, this may be the most neglected area of all in marriage.

For some reason we seem to let the barriers down after we are married. We take each other for granted. We assume. We neglect. We pursue our careers. We have children. We get busy. We forget. We drift.

As a result, many marriages fail. Most couples marry in a flush of exciting romance. Candlelight dinners. Sentimental journeys. Beautiful sunsets. Whispering sweet nothings to each other. Why is it so many so soon forget the fantasy and togetherness of those exciting dates?

You must not let that happen. And if you are married and have let your romance wane, you must begin immediately to build it back. After the honeymoon, the realities of life set in. There is the everyday necessity of work. The rent or mortgage must be paid. Food must be put on the table. Clothing and other necessities must be purchased. The house must be cleaned.

And after a year or two or three, most couples plan for children. After the children come into the world, a large portion of time is taken up with them and their needs. First thing you know, you are facing mid life. The children are grown. Off to college. Or married. Or working full-time.

You wake up one day wondering how life seemed to pass you by so quickly. But you still have 20 to 30 years to live together in marriage. How sad it is that so many couples in our world today have let their precious love fade. They don't look forward to that last quarter of a century of sharing and caring for each other. That's why dating after marriage is so vitally important. Right from the start.

Why should couples stop going out together just because they are married? Or because they have children? The answer is, they shouldn't.

In fact, that's when it is more important than ever! Walks in the park. A movie. A play or concert. Out to a ball game. A Sunday at the beach or in the mountains. Dinner at your favorite restaurant. These special times are an integral part of the intimacy of marriage. But often, as we get caught up in the demands and pursuits of life, we tend to forget the need to spend time together.

Not long ago, a couple came to me for counseling. They were having marital problems. They had been married 12 years and had three children ages 10 to 4. As we talked, I discovered that since their first child was born 10 years ago, they had not been alone for even one evening! Not one night had they spent away from the children. Not one dinner for just the two of them. Now, in one way that is admirable. They certainly had devoted a great deal of time to the children. But they had neglected each other.

As the years passed, they had lost the ability to communicate with each other. They had become a father and mother and forgot they were still a husband and wife. During the counseling sessions, I recommended they begin to date each other again. It was hard for them. The children had never been left with a baby-sitter. But they made arrangements and went out to a nice dinner. It wasn't a smashing success. But it was a beginning.

Next month, they did it again. This time it was better. They were more relaxed. They talked. They laughed. They remembered. Now they go out once every few weeks. Every marriage needs that. Not always for dinner. Sometimes, when finances are a little tight, you might take in a free concert. Or go for a drive. Or take a long walk.

But once a week—certainly at least two or three times a month—every married couple needs to get out alone for an evening or afternoon. Just to be together.

Escape Weekends

In addition to regular dates for dinner or entertainment, every marriage profits by spending an occasional few days on a "mini-vacation."

In counseling, I call these "escape weekends." And I advise couples to make such escapes at least once each year — two times a year if time and finances permit. The purpose of doing this is to keep the romance alive.

I have counseled hundreds of couples. It's been humorous, sometimes, to see the reaction when I suggest this kind of getaway. One husband reacted: "Why, I can't go away just the two of us for an entire weekend. What on earth would we talk about that long?" How eloquent. He didn't even realize he had just showed how important it was. He didn't have in him two days worth of conversation with his own wife.

Some time ago, I was giving a lecture at a seminar. My topic was this very subject—how to keep romance in your marriage. I was talking about escape weekends and I noticed a woman in the audience momentarily close her eyes and she seemed to clutch her purse a little. I thought nothing more of it till the next day. She requested a few minutes to talk with my wife.

In my lecture I had mentioned how important an occasional escape could be. And I gave several ideas of how a couple might make plans and enjoy a day or two away from home alone. She told my wife that as I discussed the topic, she closed her eyes and prayed, "Dear God, please help my husband understand how much I need and want that kind of time with him."

Of course her husband was not aware of her short prayer. As they drove home from the seminar and talked about the topics, he said, "We don't need to do that kind of thing, do we?" She was so intimidated by him, she simply responded, "No, I guess not." He failed to recognize the hurt in her voice.

But the next day, when she told the story to my wife, she came to realize she had to let him know what her needs were. My wife urged her to go right home and tell him just what she had told my wife. She did. At first he couldn't see why it was so important. He didn't feel the need. Why should she? But as they talked, he began to see what he had been missing.

He had become so involved with his work, with paying the bills, with his own interests, that he had not realized he had neglected his wife. So he made plans to pick her up Friday after work. She would arrange for some friends to keep the children. They would spend the weekend at a resort condominium. It was a delightful experience. This man had forgotten how to relax. It had been years since he had sat at the beach and watched the ocean waves roll in.

They had a nice dinner Friday evening. On Sunday they got up early and strolled along the beach and watched the sunrise. And they talked. It was a new beginning.

As they walked through the waterfront shops they noticed a greeting card they couldn't resist sending to my wife and me. It was a cute cartoon drawing of a little boy and little girl walking hand in hand on the beach. Inside they wrote the message: "Having a wonderful time. Thanks so much for the advice and encouragement." They did not need to say more.

Now they plan to go someplace every year. And they are more in love today than ever. Not just because of an occasional weekend away. But because through that they began to see the necessity of keeping their marriage alive. It helped break down barriers that were starting to build. It gave them a new and different perspective. It can do the same thing for your marriage. But it does take effort.

Taking Turns

After I had completed a recent lecture on this subject, one couple told me how they had already put that to practice in their marriage. I thought their idea was well worth passing on.

They have a regularly scheduled date. It takes place sometime during the last week of each month. They have set aside an amount in their budget for these dates. It's not a lot. They can't afford a really expensive restaurant. So they have to use creative ideas.

The interesting twist was, they alternate months on who plans the date. One month the husband surprises his wife. The next month it's her turn to plan the evening. They keep their plans completely secret till the day of the event. Sometimes it's a picnic. Other times horseback riding at a resort. They have been to nice but inexpensive restaurants. They have been to concerts and ball games.

But one thing they each try to do is plan an event that will please the mate — not something they alone want to do. That makes them think about the other person and put their own selfish interests in the background. Then for their anniversary each year they do the same thing. One year the wife plans a two or three day trip. The next year it's the husband's turn to plan. The only requirement is that they set a budget in advance for the next two times. It has to be the same.

I thought that was such a good idea that my wife and I have instituted it into our anniversary plans. This year is her turn, and I can hardly wait to see what she has in store. She won't even give me a little hint. So if you thought dating was just for the unmarried, think again. Dating after marriage is far more important than before the wedding ceremony. Keep the romantic fires burning. There is nothing more joyful than a long and happy life together as husband and wife.

Every Day Is A Date

The kind of dating we have been talking about up to now is the kind where you make plans and go out. Dinners. Movies. Sporting events. Walks. Drives. Trips. But once you are married, how you react to each other every day is just as important, from the moment you wake in the morning till you fall asleep at night.

Perhaps the most important key of all toward a successful marriage is not to take each other for granted.

We all have needs, hopes and dreams. In the happiest marriages, each mate does his or her best to help the other person achieve those goals. You need to tell each other "I love you" every day!

You should talk. Not just, "What's for dinner?" But really talk. About how you feel. About what you think. About your concerns, fears, doubts. About your joy and happiness. About what hurts. About what excites.

You'd be surprised how little many couples do that. A recent study revealed a shocking statistic. The question was: "How many minutes do the average husband and wife spend in meaningful conversation each week?"

What do you think? Five to six hours? Two hours? One hour? Half an hour? Keep going. The average was 16 minutes! Can you believe that? How sad. Many have allowed their marriages to become a dull and drab part of life.

Those who want to keep their marriages exciting and fulfilling have to work at it every day. So why not begin now to view dating in marriage as part of the glue that holds it together?

Take an escape weekend as soon as possible. Go out to dinner, just the two of you. Watch the sun set. The idea is to plan an evening or a day to do something different. Go on a date. And make every day a date with the person you will spend your life with. There is nothing more important in the physical lives we lead than our marriages and families.

When Paul wrote of the relationship between a husband and wife, he said, "This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church" (Ephesians 5:32). So marriage is more than just a physical relationship. It shows a spiritual type of the soon-coming marriage of Jesus Christ to His Church.

This series of Good News articles on dating has been designed to help people young and old know how to make the most of times spent with members of the opposite sex. Most single people date hoping they will meet the person they will marry. Not all dating leads to marriage. But that's why most individuals date. It's a time to get acquainted. It's a time to learn how to consider the needs of others, how to share your life and experiences. It is a time of development and preparation. It is an integral part of life. It's an art. It's a talent—but a talent that can be learned and improved upon.

Dating is a tool of giving. Of sharing. Of learning. Of loving. We hope you will reread this series many times. While you are young. When you think you have found your one-and-only. Even years after you are married. Dating is a vital part of life. Be sure to use it wisely!

7) LIVE BY GODLY FINANCIAL PRINCIPLES

After poor communication, the single biggest problem in marriage is financial difficulties. I'd like to now quote from an article entitled "A Balanced Family Budget" by Dexter Faulkner which gives some excellent advice on managing your finances in your

marriage. Most of us are aware of these fundamental principles. The hardest part is with sticking with them. Dexter Faulkner writes:

A Balanced Family Budget

"Budgeting! Many husbands and wives, it seems, get uncomfortable when anyone mentions this touchy subject. Some are convinced they make too little money to budget. Others think they have no head for figures and can't make a budget work. So, for most people, money matters continue year by year to be a frightful experience!

But money problems are not necessary - even for you. Let's look at the principles of budget revealed in the Bible, and learn how to overcome money troubles once and for all. First, here are four keys of financing. They are essential before any budget can be put into operation:

1) Make budgeting a family project. Get everyone involved. Of course, the husband as head of the family should take the lead in planning and sticking to a budget. But the counsel and cooperation of every family member is necessary.

If you are a husband, remember that you and your wife are "heirs together of the grace of life" (1 Pet. 3:7). By all means consult your wife on how the family income is spent. Perhaps she has more time or skill than you to devote to record-keeping, or to the mechanical process of writing the checks to pay the bills. At the least, your wife should be aware of what is happening, so she can offer wise counsel and be able to handle the job if anything should happen to you.

Children, too, need to develop the right attitude toward finances. They can learn about tithing, budgeting, saving and getting the best value for their money. This includes making wise purchases and not spending money frivolously.

2) Buy quality. The cheapest is not always the best. Often, those who always choose the cheapest develop personalities that reflect this point of character. We tend to act differently when using something expensive. When making purchases, realize that many "bargains" are not always what they seem to be. Shop wisely. Evaluate an item by more than price alone. In the way it will affect you psychologically, an item of slightly higher price may be a far better investment.

3) Save. A big source of misery in family money matters is the habit of living without a savings. Some are convinced that saving is out of the question for them. But most people would not be in the trouble they are in had they only learned to practice this law of finances earlier.

Proverbs 6:6-8 tells us to learn from the ant, who "provides her supplies in the summer, and gathers her food in the harvest." In other words, she has a savings of food to tide her over the rough spots and the winter. Even if you are in financial difficulties, you need to begin a savings. It need not be large at first, just enough to develop the habit in you. Later, when you have gotten out of trouble, you will have established the pattern in your life. Many people live so close to the edge that just one extra bill pushes them over the edge into financial oblivion. How good it would be to have enough savings to pay that one bill you did not anticipate. It is easy to have it if you will just start putting a small amount away from each of your future paychecks.

4) Avoid credit buying. Just as some think it impossible to save, some are convinced they cannot get along without charge accounts. The fact is that you must get along without them, or you will never enjoy financial happiness.

Despite how much you are presently tied to revolving interest payments, you need to start getting away from them. It may take some time to break their stranglehold, but it will be worth it to your peace of mind. Solomon wrote, "The rich rules over the poor, and the borrower is servant to the lender" (Prov. 22:7). Start today to have the strength of character to wait until you can save the cash. It costs much more to pay the interest on borrowed money than it would to save the money ahead of time.

Avoid spending sprees. Almost every charge account is set up on a minimum monthly charge of 11/2 percent - that's 18 percent a year. And many charge more. Yet when you have cash, you can not only save the carrying charges, but can often buy at a discount. Of course, in certain cases today credit buying has almost become a necessity. The principle to follow, however, is that credit purchases should be made for necessities only - such as a car or home. Never should you buy luxuries on credit. Television sets, sporting goods and hobby supplies should be paid for in cash. It is usually these items that give people trouble in credit buying. It just seems so easy to buy the extras now and delay the payment until later. Don't fall into this trap.

Credit cards should not be used on major purchases where you are forced to carry the payment beyond the initial billing period. In other words, don't charge anything that you can't pay for completely when the bill first comes. Interest rates are so high on credit-card purchases that you will end up paying much more for the items than if you had paid cash.

How to Set A Up Budget

Make a comprehensive list of all debts and expenses you ordinarily have over a period of time. Include overdue, current and future obligations - everything it will take to run your family for some time to come. If the longest period you go between bills is a year, such as insurance or taxes, then your list will have to cover a year.

If, however, the longest time between any bills is three months, then your list need only cover three months. Whatever the time, put down all expenses, regular or irregular, that you know you will have during this period. This must even include money spent on recreation, odds and ends and the continuing expenses of rent, food and utilities.

Next, adjust every bill to the length of time between your paychecks. If, for example, you are paid twice a month, then monthly bills will have to be divided in half and weekly bills doubled. A yearly bill should be divided into 24 parts.

Now, make a new list of these adjusted parts (i.e., one-half monthly car payment, two weekly food bills, one-24th property tax). This list is central to the budget. If you have included every expense, it will tell you exactly how to spend each check; every one will be spent the same way. In other words, each time you get a check, this list will tell you exactly how much to put away for each future expense, so that you will have precisely what you will need to pay the bills as they arrive.

By saving a standard amount for each bill from each check, the worry of budgeting disappears. Your list of standard amounts automatically tells you how to do the job. Once properly set up, this budget needs only occasional

thought, as contrasted with the constant headache of fitting each individual bill into the money on hand. What's more, with this budget you are not forgetting any items or wasting any money.

The greatest blessing is the freedom this budget gives you when you spend the money. If you have carefully and faithfully set aside the money from each check to pay each bill, you will be able to spend it with the reassuring knowledge that it was intended for that purpose - even recreation and luxuries. So often, families actually make enough money to be able to enjoy certain extras. But without such a budget, few enjoy what they have. They may spend the money on these specialties, but always feel guilty doing so. Had they wisely divided their income into standard segments and included an amount from each check for special extras, they would be able to have these luxuries with a clear conscience.

So learn the lesson. Divide your income into definite sections so that every check is spent automatically on part of every bill. The blessings are beyond belief.

What to Include

Your list of expenses must be complete. This is especially true if your income is low or you are deeply in debt. There are a few items that must be included in all budgets:

Clothing. This is a sore spot for some families. They may manage to get what they need, but only at great pains to the budget. Clothing is a long-term need, and some forget that they will need money to buy clothes. When the time comes, it becomes a painful matter of squeezing out money here and there. Why not just save a little from each check? You do not need to spend it immediately, but when you need it, it will be there.

Entertainment. Many families feel they cannot afford entertainment. To them it is an unnecessary expense. But entertainment is a necessity for a balanced family. Many of us would be overwhelmed with the happiness that can come simply by setting a small amount away each check for entertainment.

Pocket money. It seems minor, but incidental items can do more damage to a budget than you might expect. You probably would be surprised if you knew how much money you spend on small, everyday items - toothpaste, haircuts, newspapers, to mention a few. This division of the budget may not need to be large, but if you do not include it, this one small point can wreck all your other efforts.

Begin Now

One last point needs to be mentioned. It is a little advice on how to get started. Perhaps you feel you are already so far behind in your finances that you cannot even begin on such a budget. But it is for just such a person that this has been written. The very reason to start on this budget is to overcome the problem you now think is stopping you!

Such a budget cannot work immediately for anyone near the financial cliff. Frankly, it may take several months to get fully on the scheme. The more months that pass, however, the closer you will come to being where you want to be. And the character developed in this process cannot be valued monetarily.

So the thing for you to do is begin now. Even if you have to run all your accounts in the red for months, you need to set up the plan immediately. If you cannot do what you write on your list, you will at least be able to develop the habit of learning what you should be doing. Frankly, though, if you will set up your ideal budget right away despite your troubles, realistically including all current bills, repayments of loans and mortgages, future expenses and all the other needs, you will be surprised just how often you actually can begin to fulfill the amounts you have planned to put aside from each check. Even though you can only set aside half of one bill the first month, you will be half a month's bill ahead for the next month. And eventually you will find yourself enjoying the blessings of financial stability.

Budgeting need not be a distasteful scourge, an agonizing plague upon your life. All it takes is the determination and the faith in the Word of God to get free from money worries for the rest of your life. Budgeting is a real blessing (How to Have a Happy Marriage, p.24-29).

I'd like to quote now from the United Church of God brochure entitled "Managing Your Finances" for its comments on handling money in a marriage:

Money is one of the most frequently cited reasons for conflict within marriage. It is not uncommon for both husbands and wives to have jobs outside the home - a major change from the norm just a few decades ago when husbands were expected to be the major financial providers.

With the addition of women in the workplace, household incomes have increased dramatically. However, this new windfall of money has not soothed all financial tension. Taxes and other expenses, as well as stress levels, have also soared upward. Families still face financial hardship; arguments over money still plague marriages. In this chapter we will consider some of the typical financial issues couples face and some practical guidelines for relieving stress over financial matters.

Planning children. Estimates for the cost of having, raising and educating a child run into daunting figures. Because God instructs families to provide for their own (1 Timothy 5:8), couples must realize they take on important financial responsibilities when they have children.

Preparation for children is crucial. When children are born out of wedlock, unexpected questions and problems arise. If the parents are teenagers, can they complete their education? How will they provide for themselves and the child? If they do not have the financial resources required, other family members (often parents and grandparents) or the government will probably be expected to cover their financial and moral irresponsibility.

Of course, sexual responsibility is not just for teenagers. Grown men and women must also consider the results of their actions. If they have children outside of marriage, how will they provide for a child's financial needs and for the happy, stable, father-mother environment every child needs?

God's direction is that sexual relations are proper only within marriage (1 Corinthians 6:18; 7:2; 1 Thessalonians 4:3; Hebrews 13:4). When we follow God's

command, no babies are born out of wedlock. Thus the financial difficulties that almost always accompany such mistakes are eliminated...

Finally, even married, mature adults who have completed their education are wise to plan when to have children. Some prudent young couples work and accumulate financial reserves before starting their families. Such an approach reflects personal discipline, foresight and a well-designed financial plan.

Caring for children. A common complaint in two-income households is the difficulty of finding someone to care for the children while both parents are at work. Many couples, instead of giving their children to strangers, are deciding to care for their own. One parent stays home with the children until they are old enough to be in school before returning to the regular workplace.

When the extra expenses of child care, transportation, additional clothing, etc., are taken into consideration, some families find there is little difference in their household incomes when one of them remains at home to care for their children.

Though some may view this as old-fashioned, it is precisely the approach assumed in the Bible. The book of Proverbs, for example, speaks of a father and mother teaching a child important values (Proverbs 1:8; 23:22). One of the simplest and best solutions for children is for their own parents to care for them and teach them. Yet, with so many single parents, we understand the practical problems some will face.

Sharing resources. For husband and wife to work together financially, both must be willing to share. From the beginning, God's instructions have been that "a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh" (Genesis 2:24). Later we read that husbands should love their wives and wives should submit to their husbands (Ephesians 5:22, 25).

There is no room for selfishness in the loving marriage relationship God desires for every couple. Too often, conflicts over money arise within marriages when one mate seeks to gratify his or her personal interests before meeting the needs of the family. Even if basic needs are met, arguments can arise over how additional money should be spent. When considering how many people in the world are barely able to survive, conflict over disposable funds seems ludicrous.

During His earthly ministry, Jesus Christ was approached by a person involved in a monetary dispute. "Then one from the crowd said to Him, 'Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.' But He said to him, 'Man, who made Me a judge or an arbitrator over you?' And He said to them, 'Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses'" (Luke 12:13-15).

It is easy for us to give more attention to our personal desires in this life than to think about the spiritual values we should be learning. Jesus illustrated this concept with a parable: "'The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully. And he thought within himself, saying, 'What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?' So he said, 'I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods. And I will say to my soul, 'Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry.'"

"But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?' So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God'" (Luke 12:16-21).

It is most important for us to be "rich toward God." We must make God's instruction our highest priority. Couples who keep these biblical principles in mind may find it easier to share their physical resources.

Working together in marriage. Societal customs governing which mate should handle the family finances are in a state of change. In years gone by some cultures placed this responsibility upon the husband—a value underscored by basic biblical teaching (Ephesians 5:23). But, although the husband does have leadership responsibility within marriage, the Bible also makes it clear that wives can contribute great financial wisdom and skills to the family economy (Proverbs 31).

Sometimes the wife has greater financial and budgetary skills, and a wise husband should take note. A wife may be better at maintaining the checking accounts, balancing the checkbook and paying the bills, and in such cases the family may be better off having her handle these responsibilities. In a loving and respectful marriage both partners should discuss major financial decisions and priorities, then, according to the biblical model, the husband should make the final judgment.

Although couples will have to determine for themselves who handles which financial responsibilities, it is especially important for them to remember God's instruction that they treat each other with love and respect (1 Peter 3:1-7). When these principles are employed, a husband and wife can work as a team to weather financial difficulties instead of turning on each other.

In summary, couples can greatly reduce their conflicts over money by planning when to have children and how to care for them, agreeing how to apportion their resources and learning to work together to attain their financial goals...

Teaching Children About Money. When we learn to handle our money according to God's instructions, God expects us to share our knowledge with our children so they, too, can be blessed. With God's perspective in mind, let us consider some ways parents can teach their children to properly manage their finances.

How early can children begin the process of learning about money? There is no set age, but experience indicates that as soon as they learn to use money they can learn fundamental principles about managing it.

Modern marketing efforts, for example, do not exclude children. Children's television programs often contain advertising aimed directly at youngsters. Advertisers work to create desire for their toys and other products.

Since children are exposed to advertising and experience desires for various material goods, it makes sense for them also to begin learning about money management. Understanding basic monetary concepts can be a valuable blessing that lasts a lifetime.

Consider giving an allowance. Children can begin to learn some principles of financial management if parents are willing to invest the time it takes to teach them. One way to do this is to start giving children an allowance after they learn to count. The

amount of money does not have to be large; even small amounts can provide important opportunities for teaching valuable lessons.

Allowances for young children should be given regularly, at a set time such as once a week. Help your children learn to manage their allowance by depositing it in a safe place such as a toy bank, a wallet or even a jar. This is an excellent time to teach them God's principles of tithing. Have your child put aside his tithes in a separate container. Each time children receive their allowance, they should be helped in determining and setting aside their tithes. They can also count what is in their bank each time they add to it.

Opinions vary on whether allowances should be tied to chores. Some feel it's good to give a set amount with the concept in mind that basic chores should be done by everyone in the family. Others like to tie allowances to specific chores such as making one's bed, cleaning one's room and washing dishes. Others use a mixture of the two with a set amount that increases for certain chores. Whatever approach a family employs, learning to manage the allowance, and showing that work has its rewards, is where the real value lies for young people

Financial planning. To lay a simple foundation for budgeting as an adult, children can learn to evaluate and plan their purchases. One way to do this is to have children make a list of items they would like to buy. These may be small items such as stickers, gum, snack foods or special toys. Parents, of course, should monitor choices to make sure they are safe and appropriate.

The next time you go to a store that carries the items on the list, have your child record the prices. When back at home, have him count his money before discussing which items might be purchased now and which will require more savings. Let him decide if he wants to purchase a less-expensive item on his list or wait to accumulate more money for a costlier item. When he is ready to make a purchase, take him to the store and help him count out the money to make the transaction.

While at the store, it is not uncommon for children to decide they want something that costs more than they can afford. When this occurs, loving parents will generally decline to provide the extra funds. It may seem like a tough lesson for a child to learn, but many things about life are better learned early when the consequences are minor. The same lesson applies when children spend all of their money on one item and then do not have additional funds for other things they would like. Experience is an effective teacher. As children become more conscious of time, parents can point out how long it will take them to accumulate the same amount of money again in their bank. This teaches the valuable concept of planning for purchases.

This process does take a lot of time, but the result is worth it. Children who learn to manage money at an early age will be spared some hard lessons later in life when the consequences are greater.

Older children. As children mature, their allowance can be increased and they can be given the responsibility of purchasing certain personal items. Some parents find it helpful to give their older children a clothing allowance at regular times throughout the year - such as the beginning of a school year.

They allow their children to choose the clothes they want to purchase with that money, as long as it fits mutually agreed-upon style guidelines. Although poor choices can lead to a limited school wardrobe, this, too, can be an effective teaching tool. It is

better to let children live with the consequences of their decisions at this age than for parents to bail them out financially and deny them the opportunity of learning a valuable lesson.

Saving money is another important concept parents need to teach their children. One way to do this is to open a savings account in the child's name. Depending on a parent's expertise, older children can also be taught about other types of savings and investments such as money-market accounts, stocks, bonds, mutual funds and precious metals.

Teens can learn how to evaluate and track the value of these kinds of savings and assets. They can also learn the value of compounding interest and learn to set aside funds for the inevitable emergencies that occur in everyone's life.

Another especially important area older children need to understand is credit, including its benefits and potential pitfalls. Regrettably, many adults have not yet learned these lessons. If you have learned to use credit wisely, teaching your children this information will put them years and perhaps thousands of dollars ahead in life.

It is also wise for older teens to learn how to plan for retirement. Proverbs 13:22 says it is a good man who leaves an inheritance to his grandchildren. This means there must be some forethought and planning about finances to provide for one's needs later in life.

Those who begin putting funds into a retirement account early in their working career usually see their retirement fund grow to a much larger value than those of people who wait until their 40s.

Some adults have been shocked with an alarming wake-up call in their 40s or even 50s when they realize they have not sufficiently planned for their retirement years. Wouldn't it be much better to have learned that lesson and been educated about the importance of planning for that stage of life while still young?..

Children are blessed when they have parents who love them and teach them how to manage their money. Proverbs 22:6 says, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it." Take this proverb to heart and teach your children the principles of money management. You, and they, can be blessed by your efforts (p.26-35).

Gavin Read offers these comments on using money wisely in marriage:

Another area of self-centredness can be with regard to money. This again is especially true when the wife is coping with the responsibilities of young children and has given up a job of her own...

Any salary coming in to the husband is for both partners to the marriage. I don't think it is good enough to think that it is his and that he gives his wife an allowance to cover shopping and a few extras to spend on herself. Of course there are some marriages that handle this the other way around!

The husband comes in, hands over his unopened pay packet to the wife, and she takes out some pocket money for him and keeps the rest.

I think the healthy way with money is to see it as belonging to God but given to us to handle carefully on his behalf. That way of thinking soon sorts out what we should spend it on. And it reminds us that giving to needy people and just causes is not 'charity', it is duty - and it can be a pretty enjoyable duty as well.

Husbands, beware of expensive hobbies! I thought of asking my wife to say something at this point about my interest in photography but it would probably take another book!

We have touched on the fact that money troubles often wreck marriages. The typical way this can happen is through overcommitting oneself so that in addition to rent or mortgage repayments and all the usual charges, such as gas and electricity, there are also payments on a car, on furniture, on carpets and other items. A social worker once told me that financial over-commitment was often found on housing estates where everyone was trying to 'keep up with their neighbours.

But who says we have to keep up with anybody? Why not go into marriage with a vow that you will never become a slave to such a stupid set of pressures? There are enough troubles in life outside of our control without adding some that we could avoid. And beware of so-called 'easy payments'. They nearly always mean bigger sums of money paid out at the end of the day.

Money is a strangely powerful thing. Money matters and budgeting should be talked about openly, and decisions should be shared decisions. If one partner does all this then the other can begin to feel a lesser partner to the marriage(Starting Out Together, p.83).

On the subject of money, let's hear again from Josh McDowell:

Nothing can trouble a relationship faster than problems associated with mismanaged finances. The reason is suggested by Jesus in Matthew 6:21, "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." More than any other discipline, the use of money tests the motives of a person's heart. Not surprisingly, conflict over finances is one of the major causes of divorce today...

Since you will bring your spending habits with you into your marriage, it is important that you develop healthy financial practices while you are single. The very use or misuse of money can be a dynamic source of friction in every home. One careless or undisciplined partner can literally devastate a marriage by his or her poor control and use of money (The Secret of Loving, p.214-216).

In "What Wives Wish Their Husbands Knew About Women" Dr Dobson offers us the following advice about handling money in marriage:

Though I can make no claim to wealth, I have tasted most of the things Americans hunger for: new cars, an attractive home and gadgets and devices which promise to set us free. Looking at those materialistic possessions from the other side of the cash register, I can tell you that they don't deliver the satisfaction they advertise! On the contrary, I have found great wisdom in the adage, "That which you own will eventually own you!" How true that is! Having surrendered my hard earned dollars for a

new object only obligates me to maintain and protect it; instead of its contributing to my pleasure, I must spend my precious Saturdays oiling it, mowing it, painting it, repairing it, cleaning it or calling the Salvation Army to haul it off. The time I might have invested in worthwhile family activities is spent in slavery to a depreciating piece of junk...

Let me ask you to recall the most worthless, unnecessary expenditure you made in the last year. Perhaps it was an electric can opener which now sits in the garage or a suit of clothes which will never be worn. Do you realize that this item was not purchased with your money; it was bought with your time which was traded for money. In effect, you swapped a certain proportion of your allotted days on earth for that piece of junk which now clutters you home. Furthermore, no power on earth could retrieve the time which you squandered on this purchase. It is gone forever. We are investing our lives in worthless materialism, both in the original expenditures and on subsequent upkeep and maintenance...

When I reach the end of my days, a moment or two from now, I must look backward on something more meaningful than the pursuit of houses and land and machines and stocks and bonds. Nor is fame of any lasting benefit. I will consider my earthly existence to have been wasted unless I can recall a loving family, a consistent investment in the lives of people, and an earnest attempt to serve the God who made me. Nothing else makes much sense and certainly nothing else is worthy of my agitation! (p.106-108)

8) UNDERSTAND THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN

Cecil Osborne gives us many fascinating insights into the differences between men and women and how they affect marriage in his book "The Art of Understanding Your Mate". I quote him now at length. He writes:

The difficulty of achieving a workable marriage is compounded enormously by genetic differences between any two persons. Their environmental backgrounds are different, as are their personalities, needs, goals, drives, and emotional responses....

A young woman may know intellectually that it is impossible for two imperfect people to achieve a perfect marriage, yet at a deep feeling level she entertains a romantic dream of perfect fulfillment with a husband who is gentle and considerate, yet strong and wise—a man who will meet all her needs. At this point no one man can fulfill all of her varying, limitless needs. She wants to be protected, cherished, loved, yet she desires complete freedom and autonomy. She will often push and test the limits just to make sure they are there, and to test her husband's strength.

She receives a sense of security from knowing that he is strong enough to resist, but wise enough to know when to give in! She needs to know what is expected of her, but without limiting her freedom of choice. She wants to be appreciated and to have her self-identity reinforced by oft-repeated signs of recognition, approval, and affection.

She wants, basically, to be a helper, not the boss, but she will seem to seek dominance as she pushes and tests. She desires to control within her own sphere, which involves the home and children, yet she needs a husband's concern and strength. She wants her "sphere of influence" to be reasonably flexible, depending upon her fluctuating

emotional needs; she wants to have affection expressed in many ways, both great and small. These needs may vary enormously in degree from day to day, and she expects her husband to come equipped with a degree of extrasensory perception so that he can be aware of her variable emotional states.

Little expressions of affection and approval mean more to her than a man imagines. She wants to be remembered, adored, cherished, complimented, listened to; she wants to have her feelings validated even when they seem childish or unreasonable to her husband. She needs to be made to feel feminine by being protected, cared for, looked after, to have affection often without sex, to be accepted especially when she feels unacceptable to herself.

She needs the security of the male and may prod, nag, fight, or provoke him in order to get this sense of security. This is usually an unconscious effort to make sure she is loved and especially to make certain that he is strong enough to stand against her, yet sufficiently wise to let her have her own way often enough to preserve her own identity. She frequently wants to dominate, yet needs to feel that he is in charge. She wants to be "taken care of."

She wants him to be strong enough, wise enough, competent enough, to satisfy her needs for emotional security, which she gets from a control that does not dominate or rob her of freedom. His control of the situation must not give her the feeling that she is being manipulated, and his strength must be expressed with something other than pure male logic. She subconsciously seeks a father who is indulgent of her whims, yet firm, tactful, and wise; a lover who is gentle and who will subdue her when she feels aggressive, yet be understanding when she needs to express hostility; a husband who is concerned about the nest whether he feels like it or not; a handyman eager to keep the nest intact.

In short, she desires a father, lover, handyman, and playmate—a kind of composite of John the Beloved, a movie star lover, a businessman with a brief case in one hand and a box of tools in the other, and an all-wise father. This paragon of male virtue must share his life with her, but without boring her with too many details or personal worries which would create insecurity in her. He should be able to meet these needs without neglecting his work.

She may provoke an argument by blowing up some insignificant trifle out of all proportion, and then get it all tangled up with non-essentials such as relatives or something that happened two or twenty years ago. She may leap to what he feels are wild and unsupported conclusions, relying upon feminine intuition rather than upon male logic. She wants to have her feelings validated, whether they are "reasonable" or not. She often wants understanding more than an argument, but may resent him when he refuses to play the game of "uproar." She will want to have the last word, but as often as not she will feel disappointed if she wins the argument, which reduces him to something less than a man in her eyes. More than she actually wants to win the argument, she feels a need to express her feelings. She can be both triumphant and disappointed from having gained her point in an argument.

She wants adult conversation and may seek it when he is tired and uncommunicative. She takes his lack of interest in her world as a personal affront and feels rejected. She wants him to feel that her interests are important, too. He meets her need by listening, without arguing each point and showing her where she is wrong, even when she may suspect that she is. When she is worn out with playing the mother-wife role,

she may temporarily regress to the little girl stage and desperately need him to play the role of the strong, wise, understanding, indulgent father.

The male sees this womanly personality as a mixture of conflicting, unrealistic, illogical needs which no man could completely satisfy. But he has a surprising variety of needs, too. He wants to be made to feel competent, worthwhile, believed in. He may have inner doubts about whether he is going to "make it," but cannot admit this even to himself, much less to his wife. He needs to be encouraged without being lectured to, argued with, or criticized. His ego strength needs to be built up to enable him to function in a highly competitive society. He wants his self-image reinforced, not torn down by being shown where he is wrong, even when he is.

He wants his self-identity restored subtly with sincerity and much affection, but in such a way as will not remind him of his mother, lest he be made to feel like a little boy, especially when he acts like one. He needs a wife-mother who will not dominate, yet who will minister to his needs; a mistress who can seduce and be seduced, whether she feels like it or not, who will appear as attractive to him as the women he meets during the day; a housekeeper who will take care of the home and children without making him feel guilty when he doesn't do his part.

As the home is an extension of her personality, his work is an extension of his. He cannot be as much interested in the home as she, any more than she can be as interested in his work as he is. He needs to be allowed to have his male pursuits and hobbies without being made to feel guilty. As she has her female friends and pursuits, he needs his male interests.

Whining, self-pity, complaining—in an effort to win attention from him—only succeed in driving him to the basement, the garage, the bar, or into the cold grey castle of his own loneliness. He normally hates an argument, feeling that she won't stay on the subject and that he can't win. He wants to be left alone when he is pulling the tattered edges of his ego together and is tired or preoccupied—to rest without being harried with small talk, which he feels could come at a more appropriate time or not at all. He wants her to listen to his problems and interests and takes it as a personal affront when her attention wanders, but he often has little interest in the minutiae of her daily experiences. The passive side of his nature, which he rejects, may cause him to retreat into silence or erupt in an angry outburst when he feels threatened. Such outbursts, during an argument, are the result of having his male authority challenged, a feeling of exasperation at being unable to make himself understood, or he has been made to feel like a little boy by some motherly-type rebuke.

He needs to be made to feel that he is in charge, even when he isn't, without being manipulated. Incessant demands that he take more interest in the home may cause him to balk entirely, for he may be reminded of his mother and the feeling of continual harassment of his boyhood years.

The need to maintain his male identity may cause him to feel threatened if his wife turns out to be right after all, and a reminder of this later can provoke some form of retaliation. He responds better to gentle persuasion, a seductive approach, than to demands and ultimatums. The "now look here" stance is reminiscent of mother and again he is reduced to childhood. Direct criticism, especially in public, or any form of humiliation, may provoke either an angry

outburst or silent withdrawal. He does not want his wife to be in competition with him in any area.

As she is seeking a mature, understanding, strong, gentle husband, he is also seeking the impossible: an all-forgiving, ever-loving, understanding, wife-mother-mistress; a combination of a mother giving unconditional love, a movie star who is a good housekeeper, a sounding board, an ego builder, an obedient, adoring daughter who thinks his utterances are either profound or quite witty.

This picture would seem ridiculously overdrawn to a young couple about to embark upon the matrimonial seas. I long ago abandoned as futile the effort to instruct young couples in these matters before marriage. They tended to look at me through star dust, with amused tolerance. Yes, they had had their disagreements and realized their life would not be one hundred percent bliss, but they had pretty well worked these matters out and had come to an understanding of each other. Finally I have come to the point where I ask only one thing of them: a solemn agreement that they will seek a competent marriage counselor or minister at the first sign that they are not communicating well. I tell them that the husband will normally reject any such proposal until the marriage is almost hopeless. My sole requirement is for both to be willing to seek professional assistance before arguments have turned to bitterness.

In one group session, which consisted chiefly of married persons, a perceptive executive said one evening, "I've been married for twenty years, but I have learned more about women in these few brief sessions than during the entire twenty years of our marriage." He paused, and then made a profound statement. "As I see it, women are insatiable, and men are obtuse." He was expressing his personal feelings about his own marriage. "I guess I've never really heard what my wife has been saying all these years," he said. "I grew up in a boys' school, with no mother to relate to. I've never really bothered to try to understand women's needs. But by the same token, I cannot help feeling that women are insatiable in their demands and expectations; that is, if my wife and the women of this group are typical."

In a sense he was right. A woman often appears to her husband to be insatiable in her drive to make a better marriage, to try to make her husband understand her and meet her emotional needs. With her the feminine need is essentially built in to create the best possible home and marriage and to push until she gets it. If the woman is seemingly insatiable (whether she be gentle, concealed, and tactful, or angry and demanding), the husband may appear obtuse, lacking in perception, and often dully uncomprehending when his wife is experiencing some emotional need...(p.10-16)

There is an ancient Greek myth to the effect that the earth was once populated by beings who were half-man, half-woman. They were each complete in themselves, and deemed themselves perfect. In their pride they rebelled against the gods whereupon the irate Zeus split each of them in half, scattering the halves over the earth. Ever since, the myth has it, each half has been searching for its other half. This yearning for completion and fulfillment through finding one's "other self" is what we call love.

There are so many emotional, mental, and physical differences between the male and the female of the species that it seems surprising that the institution of marriage has been able to survive as the basis of our civilisation, unless we assume that there is some subtle fragment of truth to the Greek myth.

One of the basic emotional differences between the sexes is that men are basically "do-ers," while women are "be-ers." Obviously those traits would vary

from person to person but evidence of this fundamental difference is found in the fact that men are essentially the achievers, while women generally prefer the less activist role of homemaker. Even in professions and interests normally thought of as feminine, such as cooking, dress designing, musical composition, and a score of other areas, men predominate as leaders in the field. This fact can be attributed to the greater aggressiveness of the man, the tendency to be an achiever rather than a "be-er."

Women generally do not possess the aggressive drive to motivate them to reach the top in many pursuits, except in fairly rare instances. They do not lack the ability, but the drive. The male is the experimenter, the explorer, the director, builder, creator in most areas of human endeavor, though there are individual women who equal or surpass them in many instances. That they do not do so more often does not imply a deficiency or inferiority in any sense. It is simply that other things seem more important to women than some of the highly competitive endeavors.

A woman finds her fulfillment more in "be-ing," and unless she deprecates true femininity, her essential femininity is expressed in being that for which God created her—to be a "helper." That she plays a secondary role is not implied in any sense. She finds her fulfillment as a woman when she is being a person, a mother, a wife, the keeper of spiritual and moral values. It has often been observed that women are more spiritually minded than men. More women than men attend church. Normally the wife first seeks help for a failing marriage, and then finds herself frustrated by her foot-dragging husband, who usually displays a wholly unrealistic attitude in the matter.

More than women, men tend to take chances and run-risks, and assume responsibility. Women are not incapable of taking leadership, but when they do so to any great degree, it is either because they have had leadership thrust upon them by circumstances, or they have acquired some of the so-called masculine traits.

One wife said, "I don't see why any man would be willing to undertake the responsibility of supporting a family. I would never want to take on such a responsibility!" Yet many women, widowed or divorced, have assumed the arduous responsibility of working, keeping house, and rearing their children trying to function as both mother and father. When they do so, however, though their innate capacity to assume an enormous responsibility is demonstrated, they always have the feeling that something went wrong—as indeed it did.

There is a basic emotional as well as biological drive within the woman to bear children, rear them, and keep the home. Even when she is employed outside the home, from choice or necessity, her basic and primary interest is usually not in her work, but in her home. There are deeply rooted masculine and feminine biological and emotional drives which, varying from person to person, are still basic. One of the female goals is to bear and rear children and nurture the family. She produces the children; he produces the means of sustaining them. She finds fulfillment in her children, he in his work. Yet neither finds total fulfillment in these spheres, for they each have other needs and goals.

A woman may look with awe or admiration or even unconscious jealousy upon her husband's activities. He disappears daily into what must be an exciting world of challenge and infinite variety, while she is left with what, to many women, is a dull routine of repetitious housework, often with many interruptions from children.

A husband may look upon childbirth with awe and wonder. His wife has accomplished something beyond his power to achieve. But he may also return from an exhausting day at work, silently envying his wife who, when she is tired, can at least break the monotony with a television show. Neither may be fully aware of the psychic energy expended by the other in the daily routine.

Stella, married and with four children, disliked housework and as soon as her children were old enough, she secured a position. Her husband prepared the evening meal, an older daughter did most of the housework, and Stella assumed a minimum of household responsibilities, yet in counseling sessions which continued over a two-year period, she never referred to her activities at the office. Her interests centered upon her family, her husband, her children, and herself. The family was an extension of herself, and her primary concern.

A man, on the other hand, feels his work to be an extension of his personality; his job, his future, the relationships at work, usually are uppermost in his mind....

The differences of the sexes are seen quite early in small boys and girls. Boys build, explore, play aggressive games, fight, dig, climb, and dare each other to try dangerous exploits. Girls may engage in the same activities and can feel rejected if not permitted to do so, but in general their activities are less aggressive. They begin quite early to play house and "have babies." The small boy's interests center primarily around activity, while the little girl's interests deal more with nurturing....

An interesting male-female difference is the tendency of men to "externalise," whereas women "internalize." Men deal, in general, with the exterior world—business, industry, earning a living, facts, figures, politics, general concepts.

Women are quite capable of functioning adequately in any of these areas, but by nature and preference they have a much stronger tendency to "internalise"—to get into things at a feeling level. Put simply, to be completely fulfilled a woman needs to get into a man's emotions, get married, get pregnant and become a mother, get her "nest" properly arranged, and make sure by testing that her husband will be strong enough to take care of her and her children.

These female tendencies usually operate on a totally unconscious level. They are instinctual drives, with their roots deep in the emotional structure.

Most men have, in varying degrees, a need to conquer and achieve. Whether a man is climbing the ladder of success in some chosen field, climbing a mountain, or winning a woman, the instinct is to conquer.

A woman, on the other hand, having less of the conquering instinct, wants to be conquered with gentleness and strength. She may do the initial selecting and even subtly manipulate a reluctant male into a situation where he finds himself proposing marriage; what she really wants, however, is to be swept off her feet, to be conquered. Exceptions, of course, are the overly dominant females and the overly passive males, who tend to reverse their roles....

Women are, in general, more vulnerable to criticism, at some points, while in other areas they may be much less so than their husbands. If a man cooks and serves a steak to a male friend, and the friend asks, "Where did you get this steak?" the host will reply, "At the supermarket." If a husband asks his wife, "Where did you get this steak?" her reply will be, "Why, what's the matter with it?"

Men and women are vulnerable to criticism at different points. In general it can be said that a woman is especially vulnerable in areas pertaining to her feminine role—getting a husband, rearing her children, and maintaining her physical appearance. Her self-image can be damaged at any of these points.

Women are often surprised to discover that their husbands seem abnormally sensitive. Because of a man's greater aggressiveness and capacity to face obstacles which many women would find threatening, women imagine that men should be less sensitive. But men are vulnerable, too, in such areas as their capacity to earn a living (hold a job, win success), in the area of sexual performance, and in any area which challenges their male image. Obviously such vulnerability varies from person to person, but in some degree any normal male feels sensitive to criticism when challenged or criticised at these points.

A wife can emasculate a man by holding him up to ridicule or berating, criticising, or challenging him. He can be provoked into a towering rage or caused to retreat into the silence of his own loneliness by a remark which he perceives as an attack or a challenge. To her this is sheer childishness....

When a woman asks her husband if he loves her, she is not asking for information, but for reassurance. It is partly an effort to recreate something of the earlier feeling of youthful romance, which diminishes with time, and partly because she—being a woman—needs frequent reassurance.

Women, who have far greater emotional drives and needs than men, are more "fluid" emotionally, their ego states tend to vary more, and they can lose their sense of identity more rapidly. Frequent reassurance, in a number of different ways, helps them maintain their sense of identity...(p.28-38)

The need for security is one of the strongest emotional needs a woman possesses. The term security does not mean merely financial security, though this is one aspect. Ideally she gains her security both from a husband whom she loves, trusts, and admires and from faith in herself as a person. When the husband begins to falter, if she has considerable anxiety and doubts about herself, all manner of insecurity is triggered within her.

A woman's sense of security can be threatened when her husband fails in his work or begins to drink excessively. If, instead of panicking, she can become the helper and give loving emotional support, the husband will have a far better chance of succeeding.

The business world is highly competitive. A man can make only a given number of mistakes before the axe falls. The last thing a man needs in today's world is to come home to a barrage of criticism and faultfinding. His wife has a need for security and love, and if she doesn't receive it in proper amounts, she can easily fall into the trap of becoming her husband's worst enemy—the one who is doing him the most damage at a time when, of all things, he needs strong emotional support from his wife.

Freud once said, "After thirty years of studying them, I ask myself, 'What is it that women want?'" His bewilderment is echoed not only by men, but by women themselves, very few of whom could possibly agree on what it is that women want beyond such generalisations as "security," "love," or "understanding."

The difficulty of achieving a happy marriage is compounded by the fact that men and women are basically incompatible, in that they have goals, needs, emotions, and drives which are incompatible with those of the opposite sex.

Women, for instance, are more "personal" than men. Whereas men in general tend to deal more in terms of material things, values, and intellectual concepts, women have a deeper interest in persons and feelings. It is not that they lack a capacity for abstract thought, or have no interest in material things, but for them life consists more of people than of things. What men often label female gossip is simply the manifesting of interest in persons to a degree that is incomprehensible if not frustrating to a man....

A woman instinctively and intuitively wants to "help" her husband; because no man is without faults, she sets herself the task of helping him change. She may feel a need to correct or help him with his financial responsibility, religion, basic moral concepts, or any other area in which he seems to her to be deficient.

She wants to improve him, to make him a better person, a better husband. She may want him to be more outgoing or more restrained if he is uninhibited, less cautious with money if he is ultra-conservative. If he is careless in financial matters, she will try to make him more responsible. In whatever area he is deficient she will more or less automatically set out to make him over.

Many men need this substitute mother-wife and profit from her efforts; but if she seeks to help him too rapidly, or with direct criticism, or tactlessly, the marriage relationship can be damaged seriously.

What are the traits in a woman which men value most highly? In general, most men desire these characteristics:

1. Warmth and affection. One would suppose that men, being the wage earners, would rate security highest among their needs, but tests and surveys reveal that their strongest need is for warmth and affection. Studies have shown that many unmarried women are either painfully shy or overly aggressive. Men tend to avoid both types in an unconscious need to find gentleness and warmth in a woman.

2. Responsiveness. This suggests the quality of genuine aliveness, or being in love with life. It implies a certain spontaneity as opposed to a fearful approach to life.

3. A genuine, unselfconscious femininity. Most women's magazines stress the external, superficial aspects of femininity: clothes, make-up, hair-do, style, entertaining. Any modern woman may well make use of all appropriate beauty aids, but true femininity is far deeper. Such a woman is not in competition with men, even unconsciously; the unfortunate thing about female competitiveness (the so-called masculine protest) is that when a woman has it she is nearly always unconscious of it. A truly feminine woman accepts herself as a woman and as a person. She is emotionally mature enough to have no need for either dominance or aggression, while possessing sufficient self-respect to be sure of herself. Such a woman is neither pushing herself or her femininity. She is neither shyly reticent nor aggressively feminine. As one man expressed it, "When you're with such a woman, you feel like a man."

4. A strong capacity to love. Love in this sense is not limited to romantic love, but embraces the whole spectrum of love: friendship, affection, Christian love, love of children, of nature, of life, and of God. It is not external appearances which make a woman feminine, but tenderness and a concern for others. In a dominant woman, the concern for others can become controlling, cloying, overwhelming. A truly feminine woman has a type of love and tenderness which respects the personality of others and allows them to be themselves without trying to change them, even when it is obvious that they need to change.

5. Intelligence. Contrary to the oft-expressed opinion of many well-educated women, men do not resent intelligent women. It is the intelligent, aggressive, competitive woman whom men resent. Unfortunately, most women who are aggressively competitive with men are totally unaware of this unconscious trait. If a woman uses her intelligence to hold a man up to ridicule, show him where he is wrong, best him in an argument, he may well seek safer, more comforting companionship.

As a woman enjoys being around a man who makes her feel more like a woman, so men enjoy the presence of women who make them feel more like a man. If a man comes home to a steady barrage of criticism, nagging, and whining, the time may arrive when he will come home with more and more reluctance and devote more time to outside interests. In Genesis we read that God, having created Adam, "made a helper suitable for him." In her heart, a truly feminine woman wants to be a helper, not the boss—an equal in all things, yet aware of the areas in which her capacities are most needed and valued...(p.50-55)

Love in its deepest sense might involve a wife's being considerate enough not to begin unloading her frustrations on her husband the minute he enters the door. One husband said, "When I come home at night, about all I want to do for the first half hour is to pull myself together. When my wife meets me at the door with tales of what the children have done, and expects me to listen to all of the difficulties which she has faced during the day, it is almost more than I can endure. I am not only uninterested, I am hostile. I've spent all of my energy at work, then fight traffic on the way home. To be met with another batch of problems the minute I get home makes me want to stay longer at the office, just in order to postpone the strain of having to listen to her problems."

A woman's need for a close relationship is so great that if she cannot achieve it one way, she will instinctively try another. If her efforts at communication are balked by the husband's silence, she has all sorts of alternatives at her disposal: she may become angry over a trifle, or accusatory, or depressed. In an almost frantic attempt to force some kind of communication she will push any button on his control panel; if he finally erupts with anger, she will feel that at least she has gotten some response.

Some women become ill in an unconscious effort to get attention. This illness is seldom imaginary, a form of malingering, but a cry of the entire organism: "Notice me! Pay me some attention!" Occasionally, in some types of women, it will take the form of being accident prone—another attention-getting device. At a totally unconscious level the wife is saying, "I'd like first class love. If I cannot have that, I'll settle for attention. If I fail to get your attention, I'll get your sympathy. If that fails, I'll get you where it hurts—I'll have an accident, or a symptom."

And some women, those who are desperate for love, will say deep within themselves, "If I cannot have your attention, I'll get the attention of some other man." Then begins an affair, or at least a flirtation, out of a woman's need to prove to herself that she has not lost her appeal.

Since the home is her nest, a husband's neglect of the home is a rejection of her as a person. A leaky faucet or a bedroom that needs to be painted may represent, to the male, simply a job that needs to be done. Whether it is done today or next month may not seem of great importance. To his wife, however, to neglect the repair job is a rejection of her.

In a group discussion this issue came up. A practical-minded engineer said, "Why, it's very simple. If a wife wants things done, she should make out a list and give each item a priority number. We have a little blackboard in our kitchen where such things are always written down."

His wife said, "A lot of good that does! You never get more than half the things done, no matter what priority I assign them." He grinned and she reached over instinctively and took his hand. She smiled, too, and the group sensed that she had come to accept him as he was.

A basic principle is involved here. In a happy marriage, each tries to meet the needs of the other, but since it is rare to have all our needs completely fulfilled in any relationship, we can learn to accept this fact good-naturedly...

A cartoon depicts a grumpy husband reading the paper, with his aggrieved wife standing before him. He is saying, "Do we have to try to save our marriage while I'm reading the sports page?" His reaction points up one of the most common complaints of wives: "My husband doesn't talk to me."

An intelligent wife said, "My husband comes home from work, turns on the TV and watches it until dinner time. During the meal he doesn't appear to be listening when I talk. There is no response. After dinner he reads the sports page, then watches television until bedtime. We never go anyplace unless I plan it and prod him into action. I feel I am in charge of the home, the children, the budget, and all planning for the future. He brings home a paycheck, turns it over to me, and retires from life."

She happened to be an unusually even-tempered uncomplaining wife. Her husband admitted that she did not nag. In his case, he was not retreating from a nagging wife; he was simply a non-communicative individual, virtually incapable of carrying on a conversation.

There is another family situation in which the husband retreats from his wife's barrage of words. One such wife was described as a one-woman grievance committee, always in session. Her husband's only alternatives were to listen sympathetically night after night, which was, for him, an impossible task; to confront her with the fact that she was playing a martyr's role; to change the subject, a ploy which he had tried without success: to tell her firmly that he had no intention of coming night after night to a torrent of complaints; to retreat. Being a pleasant, rather passive individual, he chose the last alternative. His wife accordingly complained that her husband never talked to her.

Another reason for the uncommunicative male is that after two persons have lived together for some years, they are "all talked out." This is much more true

of the husband than of the wife. Men tend to deal largely in terms of ideas, concepts, facts, and opinions. After they have talked these out, there is, for some men, little to share. Women, on the other hand, are much more in touch with their feelings, more interested in persons and their surroundings. Consequently, they have more to talk about.

In a restaurant it is quite easy to pick out the married couples. Quite apart from the age factor, married people are easily spotted by the simple fact that there is usually little exchange of conversation. What there is usually desultory. Engaged couples, viewing this phenomenon while they engage in vivacious conversation, usually vow that their marriage will never become so dull and uninteresting.

One husband said, "My wife sometimes shakes me awake and says, 'Talk to me!'"

"Talk to you! What about?"

"Anything. Just talk to me."

"But I have nothing to talk about."

"What are you feeling?"

"Feeling? I feel tired. Sleepy. A little hostile because you won't let me alone."

"Good. That is a feeling. Tell me some more. What are you really feeling?"

Eventually, he said, he broke down under her insistency and admitted that he had been feeling considerable anxiety over the possibility of losing his job. She was gratified that he would tell her, so that she could share in his life. A day or two later she kept pressing to know what he felt. Finally, feeling some irritation over her insistence, he admitted that he was afraid of people. They talked about this for an hour.

"What is it," he asked me, "that makes women want to pry into your innermost secrets? What is it they want?"

"They want to know their husbands," I said. "Your wife felt she didn't know you, really. You told her only what you wanted her to know and kept your fears and anxieties to yourself. She sensed this, and wanted you to share yourself with her."

"I didn't want to bother her with my personal anxieties," he said. "You mean you didn't want her to discover how scared you were?"

"Yes, I suppose that's it. I needed to preserve the image of the strong, silent, totally competent male. I think I felt I'd be vulnerable if I revealed my weaknesses to her."

"How did she take it when you told her how scared you were?"

"She loved it."

During courtship and the early years of marriage, there is much to talk about. Both partners assume that this situation will continue. They are learning to adjust to each other and exchange opinions on almost everything. In time, however, most topics have been discussed, all aspects of their lives have been

explored, and there just isn't much to talk about unless they develop some mutual interests or share at a feeling level...(p.70-74)

A woman is vulnerable at the point of being able to find a suitable husband, create a home, and be successful in bearing and rearing children. A man is vulnerable in the areas of finding a suitable lifework, succeeding in earning a living, and fulfilling his sexual role as father and husband. As a man should never criticize a woman at the points where she is most vulnerable, neither should a man be criticized at his points of vulnerability. Comparisons are odious! No woman could possibly react other than with resentment at having her cooking compared with that of her husband's mother. Any man would react with hostility if his earning capacity was compared with that of his father-in-law or the man down the street. In fact, criticism at any point is the poorest form of communication and the most destructive.

The art of communication is much more complex than learning to drive an automobile, or to type, yet we expect young people in their late teens or early twenties to be able to establish a happy marriage and know how to communicate without the slightest preparation. The human personality is much more complex than an electronic computer, yet we would not dream of turning a totally inexperienced person loose in a room with a battery of computers, suggesting that he would learn how to operate one successfully by trial and error! Society has failed miserably in preparing us for marriage...(p.84-85)

Men are much more reluctant to seek help for a faltering marriage than women. In seven out of eight instances, the wife first seeks help or proposes it. The male ego is usually threatened at the prospect of airing domestic problems with a marriage counselor or psychiatrist. I can think of only two instances out of hundreds in which the husband first sought help. In one case, the wife had already made up her mind to end the marriage. The other case involved a passive man married to a strongly dominant woman. When we eventually succeeded in having her come in for a discussion, she proved hostile and uncooperative. In all other instances, over a period of nearly forty years, the wife first sought help.

A man will take his car to a mechanic, have a dentist take care of his teeth, call a competent repairman to fix his television set, but when his wife suggests that they consult a counselor about a marital problem, the typical response is, "No! We're adults; we'll work this out ourselves. What can one of those head shrinkers tell us that we don't know already?"

The human personality is roughly a hundred thousand times as complex as a television set, and the marriage relationship is much more complex than any other. It is a totally unrealistic, fear-ridden response on the part of the husband which causes him to reject professional help. In this, as in certain other areas, the woman is much more realistic.

Men tend to be "solution oriented" except where the marriage is concerned; when a wife is emotionally upset, the male mind automatically seeks a solution. In an effort to stop her tears he may utter such banal and unacceptable solutions as, "Don't take it so hard, honey. It isn't all that bad." This, of course, is a rejection of her feelings and of her.

Or he may try to get her to stop crying, because she makes him nervous or upset. No one has told him, of course, how to handle this situation, and all of his

automatic responses are likely to be wrong. If he could learn to validate her feelings, he could go a long way toward resolving the problem. Validating her emotions calls for some response such as, "Tell me all about it, dear. What happened?"

Then, having heard her story (whether she is weeping or livid with rage) he could validate her feelings still further by saying, "Yes, I think under the circumstances, if I were you, I'd feel the same way." At this point she doesn't want solutions, but understanding and emotional support(p.88-89).

The other classical piece of work which deals with the differences between men and women is, of course, Dr Dobson's best-known book "What Wives Wish Their Husbands Knew About Women". I'd like to offer now a number of quotes from his book on this subject. Dr Dobson writes:

Depression is not uniquely characteristic of women, certainly. But it occurs less frequently in men and is apparently more crisis oriented. In other words, men get depressed over specific problems such as a business setback or an illness. However, they are less likely to experience the vague, generalized, almost unidentifiable feeling of discouragement which many women encounter on a regular basis. Even a cloudy day may be enough to bring on a physical or emotional slowdown, known as the blahs, for those who are particularly vulnerable to depression.

The impact of depression can be minimized somewhat by an understanding of the cyclical nature of emotions occurring in both sexes. Haven't you observed from your own experience that highs are followed by lows and lows by highs? There is a regular fluctuation, almost like a mathematical sine curve from a peak of enthusiasm to the depth of gloominess.

Furthermore, individual personalities do not extend much farther in one direction than they do the other. In other words, if we draw a line across the middle of the curve, symbolizing the emotional centre (neither high nor low), the distance from there to the peak for a particular person, is almost the same as the distance from there to the valley...(p.15-16)

Those are people who don't get very excited about many things also don't get very depressed either. Bad news is received as calmly as good news. On the other hand you have people who are extremely excitable. They are extremely happy and jolly. Their great highs are followed by lows of the same magnitude more often than not and are particularly susceptible to feeling depressed. Because of this general rule of the magnitude of our highs matching our lows we can be aware of when we might hit such lows as they can follow great highs...

I would like to stress a fact understood by very few women: self-esteem is directly related to estrogen levels; hence, it fluctuates predictably through the twenty-eight day cycle...In the normal menstrual cycle, estrogen peaks at midcycle(ovulation). Both estrogen and progesterone circulate during the second half of the cycle, falling off just prior to menstruation. Moods change with the fluctuating hormone levels; women feel the greatest self-esteem and the least anxiety and hostility at midcycle...

The information provided above can be invaluable to a woman who wants to understand her own body and its impact on her emotions. Most important, she should interpret her feelings with caution and skepticism during her premenstrual period. If she can remember that the despair and sense of worthlessness are hormonally induced and have nothing to do with reality, she can withstand the psychological nosedive more easily. She should have a little talk with herself every month, saying: "Even though I feel inadequate and inferior, I refuse to believe it. I know I'll feel differently in a few days and it is ridiculous to let this get me down. Though the sky looks dark, I am seeing it through a distorted perception. My real problem is physical, not emotional and it will improve soon.

Women certainly wish their husbands understood these physiological factors which play such an important role in the female body. Having never had a period, however, it is difficult for a man to comprehend the bloated, sluggish feeling which motivates his wife's snappy remarks and irritability during the premenstrual period. It would be extremely helpful if a husband would learn to anticipate his wife's menstrual period, recognizing the emotional changes which will probably accompany it.

Of particular importance will be a need for affection and tenderness during this time, even though she may be rather unlovable for three or four days. He should also avoid discussions of financial problems or other earth-shaking topics until the internal storm has passed and keep the home atmosphere as tranquil as possible. If his wife seems to be sinking into despair, he should give her the speech described for self-interpretation in the previous paragraph...(p.151-153)

Homemakers have been teased and ridiculed and disrespected. They have been the butt of jokes and sordid humour until the subject is no longer funny. As I have spoken to family groups across the country, great frustration has been expressed by those women who have been made to feel dumb and foolish for wanting to stay at home. Those who are dedicated to their responsibilities are currently being mocked in magazines as "supermoms". They have heard the prevailing opinion: "There must be something wrong with those strange creatures who seem to like domestic duties and responsibilities"...

But the decline in self-respect among women has other causes as well. Another highly significant factor has to do with the role of beauty in our society. I documented this problem extensively in my book "Hide and Seek" and will not take the time to restate the entire issue here. It is enough to say that physical attractiveness(or lack of it) has a profound impact on feminine self-esteem. It is very difficult to separate basic human worth from the quality of one's own body; therefore a woman who feels ugly is almost certain to feel inferior to her peers. This pressure is greatly magnified in a highly eroticized society such as ours. Isn't it reasonable that the more steamed up a culture becomes over sex(and ours is at the boiling point), the more likely it is to reward beauty and punish ugliness? When sex becomes super-significant as it is today, then those with the least sex appeal necessarily begin to worry about their ability to compete in the marketplace. They are bankrupt in the most valuable "currency" of the day. Millions have fallen into that trap...(p.25-26)

A closer look at the women's responses reveals a highly significant trend among American housewives. Fully one-third of the group ranked three items within the top five(Low Self Esteem; Loneliness, Isolation, Boredom; and Absence of

Romantic Love in Marriage). The ladies were saying in effect: 1) I don't like myself; 2) I have no meaningful relationships outside my home and 3) I am not even close to the man I love. These three categories obviously encompass the whole world! These young, attractive wives and mothers admitted to being emotionally isolated from all other human beings on earth! And therein lies the greatest source of feminine discontent in twentieth century America.

Feelings of self-worth and acceptance, which provide the cornerstone of a healthy personality, be obtained from only one source. It cannot be bought or manufactured. Self-esteem is only generated by what we see reflected about ourselves in the eyes of other people. It is only when others respect us that we respect ourselves. It is only when others love us that we love ourselves. It is only when others find us pleasant and desirable and worthy that we come to terms with our own egos. Occasionally, a person is created with such towering self-confidence that he doesn't seem to need the acceptance of other people, but he is a rare bird. The vast majority of us are dependent on our associates for emotional sustenance each day...(p.60)

At this point I offer a message of great importance to every husband who loves and wants to understand his wife. Whereas men and women have the same needs for self-worth primarily from the reputation he earns in his job or profession. He draws emotional satisfaction from achieving in business, becoming financially independent, developing a highly respected craft or skill, supervising others, becoming "boss" or by being loved and appreciated by his patients or clients or fellow businessmen. The man who is successful in these areas does not depend on his wife as his primary shield against inferiority. Of course, she plays an important role as his companion and lover, but she isn't essential to his self-respect day by day.

By contrast, a homemaker approaches her marriage from a totally different perspective. She does not have access to "other" sources of self-esteem commonly available to her husband. She can cook a good dinner but once it is eaten her family may not even remember to thank her for it. Her household duties do not bring her respect in her community and she is not likely to be praised for the quality of her dusting techniques. Therefore, the more isolated she becomes, the more vital her man will be to her sense of fulfillment, confidence and well-being. He must be that "one person" of who Dr Glasser wrote, and if he is not, she is "unable to fulfill her basic needs". That spells trouble with a capital T...(p.64)

Question: How do you feel about employment for mothers of preschool children? What part does their "outside" work play in the problem of fatigue and time pressure?

Answer: It is reasonable, isn't it, that one cannot carve forty choice hours from the week for an investment in a job without imposing "fatigue and time pressure" on the remaining portion. Thus, I am strongly opposed to the mothers of preschool children holding full-time employment witnessing a vast movement of women into the commercial world with numerous consequences for the home and family.

As stated before, every disenchanted housewife is being offered the same solution to her low esteem: get a job, have a career and do your own thing. Almost half of the women in this country are currently employed (30,370,000 according to government figures published in 1973) and the totals are rising. My viewpoint on this national trend is not likely to win many admirers within certain circles but I cannot remain

silent on so important a topic. In short, I believe this abandonment of the home is our gravest and most dangerous mistake as a nation!

Certainly, there are stressful financial situations which demand a wife go to work to help support the family. And there are more serious marital disruptions where the husband either cannot work or is removed from the home for one reason or another. These problems obviously require financial contribution of the women involved. However to sell the concept across America that every female who isn't working is being cheated and exploited is a lie with enormous consequences...(p.54-55)

Female sexual desire tends to be somewhat cyclical, correlated with the menstrual calendar, whereas males are acyclical...

Women are much more discriminating in their sexual interests. They less commonly become excited by observing a good-looking charmer or by the photograph of a hairy model; rather, their desire is usually focused on a particular individual whom they respect or admire. A woman is stimulated by the romantic aura which surrounds her man, and by his character and personality. She yields to the man who appeals to her emotionally as well as physically. Obviously there are exceptions to these characteristic desires but the fact remains: sex for men is a more physical thing; sex for a woman is a deeply emotional experience.

Now, so what? How can this sexual distinction interfere with a marital relationship where genuine love is evident? Simply this: unless a woman feels a certain closeness to her husband at a particular time – unless she believes he respects her as a person – she may become unable to enjoy a sexual encounter with him.

A man can come home from work in a bad mood, spend the evening slaving over his desk or in his garage, watch the eleven o'clock news in silence and finally hop into bed for a brief nighttime romp. The fact that he and his wife have had no tender moments in the entire evening does not inhibit his sexual desire significantly. He sees her on her way to bed in her clingy nightgown and that is enough to throw his switch. But his wife is not so easily moved. She waited for him all day, and when he finally came home and hardly even greeted her, she felt disappointment and rejection. His continuing coolness and self-preoccupation put a padlock on her desires, therefore she may find it impossible to respond to him later in the evening. Let me go one step further: when a woman makes love in the absence of romantic closeness he feels like a prostitute. Instead of participating in a mutually exciting interchange between lovers she feels used. In a sense her husband has exploited her body to gratify himself...

If I had the power to communicate only one message to every family in America, I would specify the importance of romantic love to every aspect of feminine existence. It provides the foundation for a woman's self-esteem, her joy in living and her sexual responsiveness. Therefore the vast number of men who are involved in bored, tired marriages – and find themselves locked out of the bedroom – should know where the trouble possibly lies. Real love can melt an iceberg...

Many women stand in amazement at how regularly their husbands desire sexual intercourse. In this instance there is a matter which husband wish their wives knew about men. When sexual response is blocked, males experience an

accumulating physiological pressure which demands release. Two seminal vesicles (small sacs containing semen) gradually fill to capacity; as maximum level is reached, hormonal influences sensitize the man to all sexual stimuli. Whereas a particular woman would be of little interest to him when he is satisfied, he may be eroticized just to be in her presence when he is in deprivation.

A wife may find it difficult to comprehend this accumulating aspect of her husband's sexual appetite, since her needs are typically less urgent and pressing. Thus, she should recognize that his desire is dictated by definite biochemical forces within his body, and if she loves him, she will seek to satisfy those needs as meaningfully and regularly as possible. I'm not denying that women have definite sexual needs which seek gratification; rather I am merely explaining that abstinence is usually more difficult for men to tolerate...(p.114-118)

As long as a husband and wife are satisfied with each other, it doesn't matter what Cosmopolitan magazine says their inadequacies happen to be. Sex has become a statistical monster. "The average couple has intercourse three times a week! Oh no! What's wrong with us? Are we undersexed?" A husband worries if his genitalia are of "average" size, while his wife contemplates her insufficient bust line. We are tyrannized by the great, new "sexual freedom" which has beset us. I hereby make a proposal: let's keep sex in its proper place; sure it is important, but it should serve us and not the other way around!...(p.120-121)

To conclude this point I'd like to finally quote from "Letters to Philip" where Charlie Shedd gives us men some tips on how to treat a lady. He writes:

How to Treat a Woman in Public

1. When you enter the room, take her arm and come in smiling. If you look happy, she will, and God knows the world needs encouragement.
2. Walk proud! Act like you are thinking "How could I be so fortunate? If you stick out your chest she will too. Most women look better that way.
3. Say something nice when you introduce her. I mean about her. This is good practice and it lifts her spirits. If you make her feel good, you feel good also.
4. When you sit down to dinner, hold her chair! Then pat her on the shoulder and smile. Keep smiling till she looks up. She'll soon catch on and it becomes a ritual. This is a very good thing.
5. When the conversation lags ask her a question! Be sure you choose one she can answer. Make it one of her favourite subjects and always wait for her reply. Never forget, smart people make others feel smart.
6. Never, and I mean never, fuss over little points in her story. Who cares whether the roses were true pink or only a faded red? If she is all wrong, somebody else can set her straight. But not you.
7. After dinner, if you get separated, look her up once in a while. Be sure she is pleasantly situated. Tell her you missed her and is she all right?
8. When you are ready to go, hold her coat, take her arm and open the car door for her! Not many men do and she knows it. This makes her somebody special.
9. On the way home take her hand and tell her how proud you were to have her along. A very good procedure. It pays off later.

10. Sometime when you are with her mother alone, tell her how much you appreciate her daughter. No woman alive could keep this to herself, and nothing does more for your wife than a compliment coming in sideways!...(p. 54-55)

Always, without exception, every day, all week, the whole year, permanently, with no variance and I mean one hundred percent of the time, the female of the species responds best if she knows she is number one on some male agenda! Naturally, the most direct way to get this across is to tell her. "Verbal assurance" is the term and there are not many wives who can get too much of it...

I can see you knitting your brow and wondering "How does all this 'she's tops' treatment fit in with the 'head-man' theme?" Actually, there is no inconsistency, not even a small one. They go together so well that, in the better marriages, where you see one you'll see the other. What happens is that you can be the leading man of her household only if she is the leading lady of your heart(p.58-59).

9) FULFILL YOUR GODLY ROLES

God created men and women differently and God has assigned us different roles to play in marriage as a result of the way that He made us. To increase the happiness of our marriage we need to get more in sync with the roles that He has assigned for us in marriage. To go against those roles is a recipe for putting great strain upon our marriages.

Joyce Huggett tells us the following about the roles of men and women in marriage:

The Role Of The Wife (Tit. 2:4-5)

The wife must love her husband. I have already attempted to highlight some aspects of marital love. This love includes giving another a zest for life. Today, so much emphasis is placed on the urgent need women have to receive education and training to fulfil themselves and find the answer to the 'Who am I?' question, that we are in danger of ignoring man's deepest need. It is the need to feel wanted, approved, applauded by his wife.

Irene Claremont de Castillejo puts it well. Young women "are still buoyed up by the exhilaration of their newly found status. They continue to be wives and mothers, yet are successful in man's world as well. But in so doing they often fail to realize how precarious men feel, and how much the particular man needs his woman to believe in him and to welcome his vision with as much warmth and tenderness as she accepts his child.

"He looks to her for recognition of his unique personalness. He does not want to be merely the man about the house, the husband whose duty it is to earn money, and wash up after supper. Perhaps man's need is to be trusted even more than to be understood. He needs to be believed in, and his work, whether she understands it or not, to be given full value."

When a wife fails to believe in her husband, she slowly destroys him and the marriage. I think of one young executive whose self-confidence was eroded by his

wife's total disregard for his value and uniqueness. He found himself leading a double existence. 'I am responsible in my branch of the business for the jobs of nearly eighty employees and for the operation of a business turning over a million pounds a year. Do I worry about it? Does decision-making bother me? Do I feel over-burdened or unworthy in that area of my life? No! No way do I feel second to anyone while I am at work. So why do I feel so inadequate as a husband?'

The reason he could not make firm decisions at home was that his wife did not trust him. A lack of trust is also a lack of love.

Are you contemplating marriage? If so, wives-to-be, are you prepared to renounce the pursuit of self-actualization, discovering yourself, striving to keep your career, struggling to centre life on yourself? Are you prepared to stand by your husband, be loyal to him and support him in his career? How do you feel about expressing love for him in this way? Do you believe in him?

And how do you feel about the vocation to motherhood? This is another 'fixed wifely role' which is not only contained in the Bible but which is also a biological fact. The woman conceives babies. This makes inevitable inroads on her career, time, energy, body, hormones and emotions. Are you prepared to accept this role? If not, perhaps you should choose not to marry?

Of course, bringing children into the world demands not just motherhood but parenthood. The need today is for full-time mothers and devoted fathers. How do you feel about devoting your lives to your future offspring?

The Husband's Role (Eph. 5:21ff, Ezek.16)

In the past it was thought that the husband's responsibility stopped at providing for his wife materially. If he contributed an adequate, regular salary and a roof over her head, he had fulfilled his duty. He was a successful husband. This impoverished view of the man's role is unbiblical.

As Paul puts it, the husband must love his wife in the same way as Christ loves His bride. This provision is all-inclusive. It is material (Mt. 6:26-32), spiritual (Jn. 3:16), emotional (Ezk. 16:6) and intensely practical (John. 13:5). What is this example saying to husbands today?

The discernment of Christ, which recognises not just the surface needs of His bride but which penetrates into the deep recesses of her psyche to recognise and meet her unspoken needs, must also be imitated by Christian husbands. Just as man has a craving to be trusted, his wife has a yearning to be acknowledged and loved for who she is. She has a need to be set free to become the person God made her to be. This is life; the abundant life Jesus promised. How can a husband draw out his wife's fullest potential?

The secret lies in Ephesians 5:21. This Christ-like headship expresses itself in self-giving. Even the Son of man came, not to be served, but to serve (Mk. 10:45). The pattern for husbands to follow is a superlative standard of self-sacrifice which is unafraid to stoop to do filthy, menial tasks.

Husbands-to-be, are you prepared to assist your partner in the mundane, domestic chores so that she is free to express herself outside the confines of the home? How do you feel about expressing your love for her in this way?

When a husband recognises his wife's latent talents and promotes them, he is expressing Christ-like love. When a husband acknowledges the sacrifices his wife makes to create a happy home and makes provision for her to push out the boundaries of her own existence, it is Christ-like love that he is demonstrating. And when a man refuses to leave his wife with heart-wounds that will not stop bleeding, but makes emotional provision for her, he is fulfilling his role as a husband in the fullest sense of that word. Role fulfillment is not task-oriented; it is an attitude.

When both partners allow their attitudes to be transformed by Christ, they stop fighting for rights. Instead, they seek out ways of ensuring that neither abdicates his/her God-given role, that each assists the other in fulfilling this role. Intimacy and comradeship are not excluded. On the contrary, this togetherness is the driving force thrusting the couple into the adventure of marriage, a journey characterised by flexibility in love...(p108-111)

The world persuades us to seek self first. Self-fulfillment, self-indulgence, self-seeking are preferred to sacrifice. But, as Christians, we are called to run counter to this worldly suggestion. And this submission results in the kind of exhilarating, adventurous, successful partnership which the writer of Proverbs implies.

This deliberate self-renunciation is hard. But doesn't love want to make sacrifices? John Powell suggests that it does, "Love implies that I am ready and willing to forgo my own convenience, to invest my own time, and even risk my own security to promote your satisfaction, security and development."

That is submission. It is the inward compulsion of love to love. How do you feel about giving love in this way?

Jesus models this kind of submission with poise and strength. He rejoiced in His unity with the Father. 'I and the Father are one' (Jn. 10:30). This equality did not prevent His ensuring that He lived and worked in complete alignment with His Father's will. In fact, this equality of love ensured that He wanted only what His Father wanted. And this oneness did not blind Him to the paradoxical nature of their relationship. He could declare, with pride, 'My Father is greater than I' (Jn. 14:28). His Father was the head.

Just as Jesus donates all He is and all He has to the Father, so the Christian wife is required to offer her whole self to her husband. For this paradox, equality with headship, extends to marriage. Husband and wife are equals, but the husband is the divinely-appointed chief amongst equals. Is this degrading? Is it demeaning? Is it insulting the wife? Where headship and submission are correctly understood and appropriated, the answer to those questions is an unequivocal 'no'.

Are you prepared to allow your life and talents to intertwine with your partner's?
What are you prepared to sacrifice for your partner's well-being and the success of your relationship?
Whose side are you on? Your own? Or your partner's?

What Is Headship? (Eph. 5:23)

If this headship were based on power, authoritarianism or dictatorship, then the wife's position in the relationship would be precarious. But Christ-like headship is not power based. On the contrary, its motivation is the self-giving love which costs. The

archetype is Christ's headship. 'Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her' (Eph. 5:25).

Thus headship knows nothing of rights to be claimed. It calls forth a superlative standard of self-sacrifice. Headship banishes harshness. Its gentleness draws out the wife's full potential. Headship protects the successful wife and it embraces her when she fails. 'While we were still sinners Christ died for us' (Rom. 5:8).

Christ's headship over His bride, the church, refuses to dilute the Father's will. Because He is intimately in touch with His Father, because He, Himself, is in submission to God, living a life of unfailing obedience, His instructions for the bride are incisive, accurate, powerful and life-giving. The Christian husband, similarly, is required to listen to God, to exercise his headship by taking the initiative while ensuring that all his plans originate in God. And, of course, the obedience of the wife will never be taken for granted if the husband is, in turn, obeying the Lord Christ; if he is loving his wife as Christ loved the church, forgave her and sacrificed for her.

Headship demands wholesome, healthy, positive, self-effacing love. Submission calls for a high degree of self-sacrifice. Thus mutual giving of oneself to the other is love's strength. It is not weakness. It prompts two vital questions. Not 'What is best for me?', but 'What is best for my partner?' and 'What is best for our marriage?' Two people moving into marriage with this motivation may not succeed all of the time. In partnership with Christ they will succeed most of the time. This mutual self-giving promotes growth. Both partners grow. The relationship grows. This growth is not painless; but then, even growth in nature cannot take place without a struggle. There is inevitable striving and pain involved in growing.

How do you feel about this approach to marriage? Are you prepared to accept headship?

Which do you feel is the harder role to play?

What makes this partnership so exciting?

A husband and wife who freely donate themselves to one another in this way achieve the intimacy most couples desire when they marry. This closeness is not claustrophobic. David and Vera Mace describe it well, "Marriage...is the intricate and graceful cooperation of two dancers who through long practice have learned to match each other's movements and moods in response to the music of the spheres."

This free-flowing movement between husband and wife is sometimes tender, gentle and gracious; sometimes strong, healthily competitive and co-operative. Neither seeks to usurp Jesus' role in the relationship. They know that He is the Lord of the marriage. Neither over-plays or under-plays his/her own role. They seek a harmony which is life-giving to them, which flows out to others and which brings glory to Christ.

This clarity of purpose and lack of ambiguity add verve to the relationship. Take decision-making, for example. Both contribute their separate insights to the problem in hand. Both submit their wisdom to God's greater wisdom. And in the rare eventuality of a stalemate, the husband has the casting vote. This is not insulting. It is practical common sense that one partner should have the majority vote. The Bible grants this privilege to the husband. Both submit their

wisdom to God's. That, of course, is not possible where a Christian partner is married to a non-Christian. It is one of the reasons why you should marry someone who is going the same way with Christ. This avoids the frustration of a lopsided spiritual relationship.

It frequently happens that a strong, forceful woman marries a shy, retiring man. It seems that she is far more capable of casting the decisive vote than he. Where such wives are prepared to donate their insights and skills to their husbands and their marriages, a beautiful transformation often takes place. Husbands discover their full potential. Their ability to lead increases as their wives encourage them to cut their marriage to a biblical pattern. It is one of the rewards of self-giving love (Growing Into Love, p.116-119).

Charlie Shedd in "Letters to Philip" has this to say about male leadership in the family:

The other day I saw an interesting plaque in one of our neighborhood gift shops...The motto read: WHEREVER DAD SITS IS THE HEAD OF THE TABLE. I hope that it sells like crazy because this is one of the basic needs of every home. So one of my first bits of advice on how to treat a woman is "Take charge!"

For the good of your marriage, for the good of your children-to-be and for the good of the nation's future I hope that you'll read me loud and clear...The image here is not that of a mighty potentate sitting on his throne, ruling his cowering subjects with an iron hand. This is more like a conductor standing on his box directing a symphony. Delicate but definite! Subdued, yet powerful.

"As you know, I see many marital problems from the inside. Some things you wouldn't believe. Others are downright funny. But in some the pain is awful and among the worst are those where the only right words are "Get your foot off the lady's neck, Hitler! You can never win a woman's love by applying the hobnail boot."

What I am saying is that women hate dictators, despots, tyrants and old meanies – but they respect strong leaders.

Here are three quotes from the feminine front to show you what I mean. Number one is the word of a successful lady editor.

'All day long,' she says, 'I make decisions. I talk with men, deal with men, compete with men. But at night I long to be all woman. It is so good to have a man who will open the door, order the meal and give me the feeling that I can let down now.'

The next witness is a sweet little wife whose husband obviously knows what he's doing. 'Once in a while,' she smiles, 'Tommy sticks his chest out and says, 'Now you listen to me, squaw! Get back in your wigwam. I'm the chief and don't you forget it!' On first hearing, you might think this borders on rough handling. But this is what she says, 'It's funny what this does. When he says it nice, I get the best feeling. You know, all secure, and like that!'

Number three is something else. This poor soul is at the opposite end of the problem. 'Can you imagine how I felt?' We were hardly home from our honeymoon when I saw that clearly Lawrence didn't need a home, he needed a nursery. Now don't get me

wrong. I know every man feels like a cry baby some days and I enjoy mothering him once in a while. But all the time? When is it my turn?

I could go on parading a long line of these. Some good. Some bad. But none quite as sad as the weary women who can't lean because there is nothing to lean on. Their men are too weak, too careless, too preoccupied, too much at the office, too long at their cups or too something else to be the strong male figure at the head of the house.

Of course, like everything else, there are two sides to this story. Some juggernaut types may want their men to be submissive. But I also know good women who took command because somebody had to march the troops and dad was too weak to do it.

So take it from me, your wife will love you more if she knows that you know when to stand up and say, 'Have no fear! Your leader is here!'(p.13-15)

Donald Schroeder offers us the following advice about the roles of men and women in marriage in his article, "When Marriages Go Sour – Attitudes That Sweeten". He writes:

The Husband-Wife Relationship

God created humans male and female. And for an incredible transcendent potential, little realized. He created woman to be a helper and companion to man (Gen. 2:18). Few realize today the Almighty Creator ordained that man shall rule over his wife and properly lead her. But emphatically not as an overbearing master unjustly and cruelly ruling a slave.

It is vital to understand two important facets of the husband-wife relationship. One, a husband, as captain of a two-person team, must call the signals. But, on the other hand, there must be teamwork. Where opinions, ideas and preferences differ they must be wisely, lovingly discussed on a basis of equality. For a husband and wife are, indeed, heirs together of the grace and kingdom of God (I Pet. 3:7).

Damaged marital relations cannot be restored if marriage partners forget the structure of government God ordained in marriage. Society is trying to play a game with 50-50 marriages; it doesn't solve problems - it compounds them. The husband, who should be the leader in a marriage, and the wife must not act in ways that antagonize each other. The husband should take the lead in resolving differences and encouraging cooperation...(p.16-17)

It is ignorance to drop burning matches into gasoline cans to see if they will burn or explode. Similarly, breaking God's marital laws will burn you. Break God's laws and they break you! Millions are paying painful mental, emotional and physical penalties for rejecting or ignoring God's revealed laws on sex and marriage.

True love is the way of giving, sharing, helping, uplifting, being constructive, being encouraging. It is the opposite of the way of taking, of adultery, of selfishness, of hurting others and being unmerciful. Those are Satan's ways and attitudes. They produce evil and suffering in human lives and marriages. So let us not forget. God commanded a man to properly rule over his wife (Gen. 3:16).

Women these days are increasingly ruling over weak and ineffectual men, which is contrary to God's law (Isa. 3:12). God will punish both men and women for forsaking their proper roles (verses 16-18).

God's Word teaches that a husband is the head of his wife (I Cor. 11:3), that man was not created for the woman, but the woman for man (verses 7 and 9). God commands men to love their wives. And wives to respect their husbands (Eph.5:33). Note how simply but beautifully the Bible expresses the truly loving, healing attitudes that are to be expressed between husbands and wives: "...husbands, dwell with them [wives] according to knowledge [of what God reveals about a woman's needs] giving honour unto the wife...as being heirs together of the grace of [eternal] life: that your prayers be not hindered. Finally...having compassion one of another..., be courteous: not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing..." (I Pet. 3:7-9).

"Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ. Wives, be subject to your husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church.... As the church is subject to Christ, so let wives also be subject in everything to their husbands. Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her... " (Eph. 5:21, 22, 25, 28, RSV).

Why is it so important for mates to live this way? "He who loves his wife loves himself" (verse 28). Men who misuse their wives or wives who rail against their husbands, damage and destroy themselves and their own happiness!

By contrast, God's way to marital peace is to "let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband" (Eph. 5:33, RSV). Isn't it time you admitted any wrong attitudes toward your mate? Isn't it time you sought God's forgiveness and help to express right attitudes and actions in your marriage? Obey God's living laws of marital happiness and healing. Express appreciation to your mate. Give honor and respect. Be merciful and forgiving. Be helpful and constructive. Live as a team, with each respecting the other's God-given role.

Obey God's instructions on marriage. Many troubled marriages need the assistance of a qualified spiritual counselor. Don't neglect to seek such help if necessary. You can improve and/or save your marriage!(How to Have a Happy Mariage, p.22-23)

For our last quote on the subject of roles of men and women in marriage I'd like to now quote from an article entitled, "The "Average, Everyday Housewife" - No Higher Calling!" by Ronald Kelly. Ron Kelly writes:

The "Average, Everyday Housewife" - No Higher Calling!

"Should we assume the top leadership positions in God's kingdom will be occupied only by those who were men in this human life? Will women be eternally relegated to the lowest, least important jobs? No!

Men and women all have the same opportunity. All who overcome will be given eternal life and the positions for which they qualify as they overcome (Rev. 2:26, 3:21).

A young homemaker summarized the problem many women face when they choose to stay home and be housewives. She wrote: "I am continually asked if I work. When I

reply that no, I don't have a job to which I go each morning, a look of incredulity almost always spreads across the person's face, and then comes that inevitable question, "What on earth do you do all day?"

Some people apparently think that homemakers just sit around all day watching soap operas, never bothering to get dressed or to get their hair out of curlers. What about it? Does any woman have cause to be ashamed if she is "just a housewife"?

Character the Purpose

God did not create women as some sort of afterthought – a last minute "Whoops! I almost forgot." The creation of women was an integral part of God's plan. Mankind was not complete with the creation of the male only (Gen. 2:18). So God made Eve, from the rib of Adam, to be his perfect companion and complete spiritual equal.

To make the human family, which pictures God's family, complete-to provide it with proper depth and to create the total environment-God established family life. Male and female. Marriage. Children. Breadwinner and homemaker. They all fit together. But how do women qualify for rulership? Just like men.

First and foremost, what each of us does most to prepare to enter God's kingdom is to develop holy, righteous, godlike character. Character transcends this physical life-physical things don't. In this lifetime we may develop great physical skills. We might run faster, jump higher, play music or sing better than anyone else. But do these physical accomplishments mean anything in the spirit world? If an athlete develops the skill to jump 7 feet 8 inches, will he be special in the resurrection? No. Not because he could jump high in this physical life. All spirit beings can most likely jump 7 feet 8 inches and much more with ease. Qualification to rule does not depend on how much we train ourselves in a physical way. Character is what carries over to spirit life.

An athlete may develop a lot of character in addition to physical skills through hours of hard work and self-discipline. A musician must also work and discipline himself to become proficient. Doing the best we can in any aspect of life is part of the character development process (Eccl. 9:10). And both sexes have exactly the same opportunities for character development.

The day-to-day events of life constantly provide opportunities to develop character. From our decision to get up in the morning through the decisions we make all day to our decision to retire at night, character is being developed - righteous or unrighteous, whichever is the case. In addition to the daily character-building process, no doubt a direct correlation exists between all of our life experiences and our ultimate potential to serve in God's government. But whether we are male or female, has little to do with the positions we attain in God's kingdom.

Some might feel the president of a multimillion-dollar corporation would automatically have a greater reward in the kingdom than a carpenter. Why? Well, because of all the decisions the president has to make and his complicated daily routine. Not necessarily. That corporate president may not have come close to developing godly character. Maybe he fought his way to the top in the competitive corporate structure and developed no godly character at all in the process.

On the other hand, the carpenter may have developed love, self-control and reverence for God through his experiences. The carpenter would be well suited to rule in the

kingdom, while the corporate executive may not even be in the first resurrection at Christ's Second Coming.

The Housewife Stereotype

Satan's society has cast the homemaker as a wet mop. She is pictured as a haggard, unattractive drudge with her hair in curlers, a broom in her hand and several screaming brats around her.

On the other hand, society idolizes the chic, modern career businesswoman. Up at the crack of dawn, she dresses like a fashion model, prepares a hearty breakfast for her family and drives the kids off to school. She puts in a full day at her office, comes home to a house full of girls (she is a Girl Scout den mother) and somehow has a piping hot dinner on the table by 7. At the same time she gives her husband all the attention and encouragement he needs, and, through all this, a radiant, cheerful smile beams from her face. Where such a modern wonder woman exists is a mystery. But we have been made to believe that this is what a woman should be.

No one ever said mopping floors was fun. Cleaning the toilet bowl is not a tremendous challenge. Soaking a tubful of dirty diapers really doesn't make the day. And many a mother, wife and homemaker who devotes her full time to taking care of the home might wonder what a hot stove, dirty floor or unmade bed have to do with making it into God's kingdom.

But the effective management of the home has just as much to do with learning to rule as any other management job any other person could have. Running a home is in many respects like managing a corporation. Let's look at the similarities.

The Executive Homemaker

We think of several things when we hear the word executive. Somehow that word smacks of success. We think of tall buildings, suites of offices, financial wealth. We visualize such top-level managers living in exclusive suburbs and driving late-model cars larger and more expensive than the rest of us can afford.

We see them, in our mind's eye, making decisions, talking on the telephone, holding important meetings, going to lunch at the best restaurants. And we are tempted to think of how well qualified they are - how much more important than we are. We probably think such a person would be much more qualified to rule 10 cities in the world tomorrow, certainly more qualified than the "common housewife." But are the jobs really that different? What are some of the things executives do?

One area is that of time scheduling. Effective executives know how to get things done. They make sure the business meets its deadlines. They have to deliver as promised. Executives make multiple decisions daily, and these decisions have to be the best and wisest possible. Executives spend a lot of time solving problems. With all businesses, things can go wrong. Problems can arise over money, personnel, equipment or a dozen other items.

An executive is responsible for the morale as well as the safety and training of those employed by the company. And then executives have to delegate. No one person can do it all. The effective executive knows how to give tasks to others who can handle the job. These are only a few of the things most commonly associated with executives. But what does this have to do with housewives?

Much! Read Proverbs 31:10-31! These verses describe an ideal executive manager, a person who scheduled time, made decisions, solved problems, was responsible over others and delegated work-and was very successful at it. Who was this person? A homemaker - the virtuous woman.

The writer probably knew one or more women who were setting examples such as he described. The virtuous woman made a profession of caring for her household the best way possible - she was much more than the false image society has of housewives today. "Give her of the fruit of her hands; and let her own works praise her in the gates" (verse 31). There it is. Her outstanding example was recorded for posterity in God's Word.

An effective homemaker employs every one of the tools of effective management. She is developing the qualities needed to direct cities and nations in the world tomorrow, just as much as anyone else is. Frankly, when you understand the job of the homemaker - the wife and mother - you might wonder if it does not present one of the greatest opportunities for skill development.

If you are a man, have you ever stopped to think about how much a wife - a homemaker - has to do? Running a smooth-flowing household takes the skill of a corporate president and then some. And that is the same skill it will take to be over several cities in God's kingdom.

Children should learn to cook, shop, repair things and help in every part of home life. So Mom is a teacher as well.

The Homemaker's Job

A housewife is responsible for making many decisions and solving problems. Let's say your family is struggling with inflated food costs (who isn't struggling just to keep up?). In many cases the housewife is responsible for the food budget. In order to feed the family well, she checks the sales, perhaps buying vegetables at one store, bread at another, coffee down the street and beef somewhere else.

But she has to be an efficiency expert as well. She has to consider the cost of gasoline to get to all the stores and the time it takes to shop. Decisions have to be made. If she really is an effective executive she will get the shopping done at the best prices and get other things done too.

Then there is delegation. Not doing it all yourself is the name of the game. Many a harried housewife cleans up after the kids, makes all the beds, washes all the clothes. Somehow she just never gets around to delegating these jobs to the children. Some students go to college not even knowing how to make a bed. Mom always did it for them. Some students literally do not know how to operate washers and dryers. And how many do not know how to put in an honest, full day's work. Not only is the mother who does it all alone making life much harder for herself, she is doing her children a great injustice. One of a parent's major responsibilities is to teach his or her children how to work.

Delegate! That means teaching the children to do the dishes, wash and iron their clothes and make their beds.

Appreciate the Wife

The woman who decides to be a homemaker is choosing as high an occupation as it is possible to choose. No executive, great financier, famous entertainer or sports personality has a greater calling or profession. It's time we all realized that.

The training of the homemaker prepares her for the kingdom of God just as other people's jobs prepare them. God has not established an elitist system of "better" jobs and "lesser" jobs. God does not look down on the janitor, laborer, farmer or housewife, while favoring the doctor, lawyer or banker.

Human societies established hierarchies of respect - class systems. Some professions seem to carry greater honor - certainly they carry higher financial rewards. But no profession will carry more social status than any other in God's kingdom. This does not mean a pseudo-communistic state will exist. God's word is clear that some individuals will work harder and grow spiritually stronger than others in this life; those who do will qualify for greater rewards. But the development of character has little to do with what job you occupy now. But, partially because of the modern feminist movement, the role of homemaker and housewife has been relegated to practically the bottom rung on the ladder of respect in this age. Women have been made to feel that if they are not in the battle for top executive jobs in the professions, they are not fulfilling their potential and aren't worth much.

It just isn't true! There is no higher calling for a woman than to be a homemaker - a full-time wife and mother. No higher calling! That statement may not win a popularity contest with the women's liberation movement, but that remains the truth. On the other hand, neither should men try to subordinate and suppress women - keep them "barefoot and pregnant" - while men go out and play the big shots. God's word is clear about the roles of men and women. They are both made in the image of God and are equal (Gen. 1:27), and in marriage each has particular responsibilities (Eph. 5:21-33).

Husbands are to love their wives as Christ loved the church (verse 25), and that includes appreciating them - treating them with proper respect, "as being heirs together of the grace of life" (I Pet. 3:7).

Many wives hold college degrees and are extremely capable women. But when they marry, they begin to devote all their talents and efforts to being homemakers - wives and mothers. It takes their full time to fulfill their roles and responsibilities. They have been developing the skills to qualify every bit for the positions they will be given in God's kingdom, if they continue to grow and overcome and are privileged to be born into the family of God at the return of Christ.

The quality that carries over to the kingdom from this physical life is character. God will not save anyone he cannot rule. The test of character in this life is the development of faith and obedience. Any position - laborer, executive or homemaker - has built into it the training necessary in preparation for spiritual responsibility in the world tomorrow. Then, unlimited power will be given to those who are changed to immortal beings.

Housewives train just as much in the character-developing process. Positions of rulership are not passed out based on how many dollars one controlled or how many employees over which one had authority, but rather on what kind of overcoming one does - on how well one does with what he or she has to do with.

God has, in his infinite wisdom, provided the means and opportunity in this lifetime for training and character development for all people whom he calls. Male and female are terms that apply to this physical life. In the kingdom we will neither marry nor be given in marriage (Matt. 22:30). Resurrected from the dead and changed from mortal to immortal, we shall all serve with Christ, ruling with him for a thousand years and then fulfilling our destinies for eternity.

10) CENTRE YOUR LIVES ON GOD

For our final of our ten points on building a happy marriage I'd like to begin with a quote from Dr Meredith's booklet "How to Have a Joyous Marriage". He writes:

This final key is no doubt the most important point of all. If you truly put your Creator and His ways at the very center of your marriage, then everything else is going to work much better.

The Creator God is the one who created man and woman for marriage. He set forth laws governing the marriage union. He desires His children to have beautiful and rewarding marriages. And, if you seek Him and sincerely cry out to Him, He will guide and bless your marriage in many different ways!

The Psalmist was inspired to write, "Unless the LORD builds the house, they labor in vain who build it" (Psalm 127:1). Without God's guidance, selfish human nature takes over and destroys millions of marriages which should be happy and fulfilling. Then confusion, loneliness, frustration, adultery, and a host of other sins follow in the wake of these broken homes. Tragically, tens of millions of children are also left deeply hurt, confused and often very bitter and rebellious. There is no end to the problems caused by selfish people who could and should have made their marriages successful!

So strive with all your heart to let the true God rule your life and rule your marriage. Learn to pray to Him regularly. If your mate is willing, develop a family practice of praying together about your marriage! (p.22-23)

On this point of praying together for your marriage and allowing God to help you build a strong marriage Charlie Shedd writes:

I spend considerable time in marriage consultation talking about prayer. In my opinion nothing, and I mean nothing, matters more than this: Can these two children of God accept the fact that He made them and brought them together to create something not first for themselves but first for Him? And if they believe this then the next question is "Will you open the channels daily for his spirit to touch your spirits and His love to come into your home?"

I have seen marriages that looked for all the world like they were shattered beyond any earthly power to put them back together. And they were. But some of these are still going on and going greater than ever because they learned to pray. So help me this is a fact. I have never known one couple who prayed together who didn't find their marriage moving toward deeper understanding, growing inner joy and a finer, fuller love...So the rule for married prayer is: "We will pray for each other and with

each other. Every day we will pray and the more we have to do the more we will remember to pray!"

Sure there are homes where God is left out and they never pray and still hold together. I'm glad that's true. It is obvious that we need permanency of every kind. But from what I've seen this truth holds: The kind of homes we need most are those where two lives are being drawn together by a holy love greater than their own(Letters to Philip, p.124-125)

To conclude this point and our ten keys to a happy marriage I'd like to quote from Gavin Reid's book "Starting Out Together" in which he offers these ten basic guidelines for a Christian home. Here are his ten points:

- 1. Be involved in the church**
- 2. Start and end the day with a simple prayer**
- 3. Make Bible reading and personal prayer a part of your life**
- 4. Never go to bed angry with another member of the family. First make peace.**
- 5. Welcome others into your home.**
- 6. Pray with your children from the day they are born**
- 7. Share your problems with each other and never be afraid to seek the help of others.**
- 8. The husband should be the leader but his leadership must help each member to be fulfilled and happy.**
- 9. Work away at loving your neighbour.**
- 10. Never forget that God loves the world and wants His people to pass on His love.**

Summary Of Those Ten Points To A Good Marriage

To summarize what we have learned towards building a happy marriage, those ten keys to a happy marriage are:

- 1) BE COMMITTED TO ONE ANOTHER**
- 2) HAVE GOOD, OPEN COMMUNICATION WITH YOUR PARTNER**
- 3) SPEND PLENTY OF QUALITY TIME WITH YOUR SPOUSE**
- 4) MARRIAGE MEANS GIVING**
- 5) BE FORGIVING**
- 6) DEVELOP ROMANCE AND FUN IN YOUR MARRIAGE**
- 7) LIVE BY GODLY FINANCIAL PRINCIPLES**
- 8) UNDERSTAND THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN**
- 9) FULFILL YOUR GODLY ROLES**
- 10) CENTRE YOUR LIVES ON GOD**

WHY DO MARRIAGES FAIL?

Now that we've looked at how to make a marriage succeed let's now look at why marriages fail.

Ronald Dart once gave an excellent sermon on this very subject called "Why Marriages Fail". He offers five common reasons why marriages fail. The following are from my own notes of this fine sermon.

1. **The first and perhaps the most common reason why marriages fail is that people won't listen to one another and seek understanding. There are few very good listeners in the world. Often we'll listen well to a co-worker and not to our wife and hence we take each other for granted. We assume that we know what the other thinks. We make up our minds about the other's motives when conflict arises.**

Because of our selfishness and desire to do things our own way we won't listen to preachers or marriage counselors unless it is convenient or it applies to others(How often I have made a point in a sermon and see a husband or wife elbow nudge their spouse in church rather than ask how it applies to themself). A counselor is trained to listen and help you understand yourself and what you want. This quality is very helpful when it comes to resolving conflict.

God told His people often, "I have spoken and you have not listened. I have sent prophets and you wouldn't listen. I sent my Son and you killed Him". We don't listen in case it infringes on what we want to do or we don't want to see.

Most people only hear what they want to hear. Are you the type who tries to practice listening to what others say when you know those things are going to be difficult for you to hear, requiring change on your part?

Proverbs 18:2 says, "A fool has no delight in understanding but expressing his own heart". Are you a fool who just likes to express himself and are not interested in what your spouse has to say on a subject that you disagree on? Or are you wise, actively listening and seeking to understand your spouse, willing to yield where it will help solve a conflict with your spouse and willing to satisfy your spouse's emotional and physical needs?

2. **We provoke and allow ourselves to be provoked too easy. Is your partner provoking you because you are not listening just as a child does when he doesn't get the attention that he wants?**

We try to avenge for our hurts. We return evil for evil rather than trying to do good to them in return and being forgiving. We keep score and don't forgive them. If we say we forgive them and don't talk to them for a while then we haven't let it go because we really haven't forgiven them. We need both a spirit of forgiveness and a lot of kind tolerance.

3. **We don't keep our word. We gave our word in our marriage vows to cherish, to honour, and forsake all others. Not being faithful, such as an affair, is breaking our word. A dose of basic christianity is what is needed in most struggling marriages to prevent them from failing. So often people in**

struggling marriages are not even keeping the most basic principles of living like a christian. Go through the Sermon on the Mount and 1 Corinthians 13 about love and see if you really are applying it, not just around church friends but at home with your wife and children.

- 4. We engage in name calling and profanity. When we engage in name calling we attack their pride and self-esteem. You greatly intensify the hurt inflicted and make it so much more difficult for either of you to yield to the other when needed to resolve a conflict. Ephesians 4:29 says not to let any corrupt communication proceed from your mouth. Get rid of profanity out of your life and especially your marriage.**

It is one thing to call someone a hypocrite and it's another to add a profane adjective in front of it. Profanity raises the level of hurt and intensity in a conflict when you really need to resolve a conflict and diffuse that hurt and intensity. Profanity is engaged in when one wants to return hurt for hurt. It is the opposite of what a christian should do, which is to be forgiving and overcome evil with good.

- 5. People lie to their spouses. When you lie you destroy the trust between yourself and you spouse. If you have a track record of lying how can your spouse know when you are telling the truth and when you are lying when you say something. Lying destroys the trust that is vital in a marriage. Telling the truth always is one of the most basic tenets of christianity in the ten commandments. Christianity should start at home NOT be the last place you practice it.**

Gavin Reid in his book "Starting out Together" offers the following insights about two common reasons why marriages fail – putting the job first and being unfaithful to your spouse. He writes:

Putting The Job First

I can think of two or three broken marriages where the job, and the amount of time it demanded, led to the eventual divorce. In one case the husband was working excessive amounts of overtime and the wife also had taken a job so that the family could move to a better home. So it all seemed very worthy. They wanted to give their children the very best. But what happened was that the husband was never home in the evenings and the wife met another, more attentive, man at her place of work. The rot set in pretty quickly after that.

In another case two very talented and ambitious people were pursuing their own careers. They both had good salaries and this led, in turn, to buying a lovely house with superb furnishings. The true cost of this, however, was that they had drifted apart. They had no energy left to work at their own relationship. As a result the husband suddenly announced that he had met and 'fallen in love' with somebody else. They trod the sad route to the divorce court shortly afterwards.

The pressures upon those on the factory floor to put in excessive overtime are often great. The same is true for many in management.

Some companies virtually demand of their young executives that the company comes before the family. This cannot be right. In some extreme cases I would say that marriage and the job will never go together...(p.85)

Forgetting Our Humanity

One final area where pitfalls occur is within our own selves as human beings. I am convinced that many husbands and wives end up by having 'affairs' with someone else because they did not remember that they were fallible human beings.

You do not have to be a lustful playboy of a husband to end up in another woman's arms. You just have to be careless. You simply have to forget that women are attractive and often very fond and caring. And you simply have to walk into temptation without realising it.

On several occasions I have seen an affair begin when a man found himself having to help some woman with a genuine need or problem; or the other way around. As the two people got more closely involved, away from other people, emotional lines got crossed and they ended up as lovers. The thing to remember is that it could happen to any of us.

I am not suggesting that we do not help members of the opposite sex. I am merely saying that it is very easy for one sort of caring to become another sort of caring. We need to be aware of this. And if we spend a great deal of our time alone with someone of the opposite sex the chances of emotional involvement are strong. There are no exceptions to this rule. The two may both be Christians. They may both be people of high moral standards. The 'other person' may be a personal friend of the absent wife or husband - but it can still happen.

One of the secrets of keeping a marriage together is recognising how easy it is to break it up. So we need to keep each other closely informed about our movements and who we are meeting and we need to be very aware of our own fallibility. If we drum into ourselves that an affair could happen even to us, then the chances are that it won't.

And a final word. If in the years ahead something like this ever does happen, do not give up on each other. We have a heavenly Father who does not give up on us and who is always ready to forgive and forget. It is only because of his readiness to forgive that anyone can get anywhere with him (p.88-89).

The following is from an article about affairs which appeared in Brisbane's Courier Mail newspaper around 1991 (I have lost the original article so I can't quote the name, author or exact date in which it appeared).

Some people view affairs as romantic – a secret love they delight in keeping hidden. "But it's not the sex that does the damage — it's the secrecy and the betrayal," said Ian Macdonald, executive director of Marriage Guidance Queensland. "While it may be highly romanticised as to what it's like to fall in love inexplicably even though you are married, we can't escape the fact that it's a betrayal of trust."

Mr Macdonald identifies six types of affairs.

"The accidental affair is when somebody gets into circumstances that are not intended, maybe because they are away from home or because of alcohol or because of peer pressure," Mr Macdonald said. "They are not setting out to cheat their partner but in a situation where they wake up later and say, 'Hell, what have I done?' "

On the other hand, philandering affairs are deliberate. "They are besotted with the opposite sex and cannot have enough of them," Mr Macdonald said. "Many of these people don't like the opposite sex. It's more a thing about scoring or a notch in the belt and I can honestly say this involves more men than women."

Romantic affairs are the most difficult for therapists to advise on. They are based on pure emotion. "Suddenly, there is a new love, a wonderful new person who is everything that the dull old partner at home is not," Mr MacDonald said. "I guess it's a new experience of being in love again, but it's a temporary one. If these two do finish up together, they are going to have to come to terms with reality later anyway."

Revenge is another reason for a partner to seek an affair. "These partners find themselves in situations where they feel wronged and aggrieved and justified in balancing the ledger in the power struggle that exists in their relationship," he said.

Desperation can also lead men and women to having an affair. "It is almost a cry out for help," Mr Macdonald said.

"Then there are also, marital arrangements which are affairs where there is no talk of the relationship being terminated. The love and energy has gone out of the relationship but there's a kind of tacit or covert agreement that this sort of behavior will be overlooked."

On a talk show that I was watching I saw an interview with a woman who had researched and written extensively on extramarital affairs. Some statistics which really stuck out in my mind were the following - 95% of all men who earn over \$70 000 a year have affairs.

Of those who do have affairs 85% of men stay with their wives (most affairs in this bracket are unknown to their wife) and only 5% of men end up marrying their mistresses.

That last statistic is a good one for those foolish women who get caught up in an affair with a married man and hope that he will leave his wife and end up marrying her.

One recent UCLA study in the late 2000's done over a 10 year period concluded that over that period the percentage of relationships that end because one partner sexually cheats on the other has DOUBLED in that decade. The rise of social media and increase in internet porn have been cited as reasons leading to this startling increase in infidelity!

Alan Loy McGuinness in his book "The Romance Factor" offers these thoughts on extramarital affairs:

Can You Feel Love Toward More Than One?

In looking at the complex reasons that we are tempted to stray, we must first dispel two misconceptions about the phenomenon of extramarital affairs. There is, for instance, the mistaken idea that you can have feelings of love for only one person at a time and that if you feel that you are falling in love with someone new, you must have fallen out of love with your mate.

That is nonsense. I talk to people almost every day who say that they are occasionally obsessed with thoughts about some new person, but that they still have tender and loving feelings for their partners.

There is another canard one often hears on this topic: "She never would have strayed unless there was something wrong with her marriage." Wrong again. A large survey of women's sexual attitudes asked those women who were having outside sex how they rated their marriages 61 percent rated their overall relationship with their husbands as "good" or "very good."

Biologically We Are Indiscriminate

What is it, then, that they want? If the marriage is happy and the sex is fine, why would one partner go to the trouble (and usually it is trouble) of burrowing into a secret life?

Because of animal desire, for one thing. One of the curious contradictions we carry with us is that, while we have a mental instinct to be monogamous, biologically we are capable of being attracted to almost any one of the opposite sex. God made us that way, doubtless for the propagation of the species. It is a foundational drive in all species--the organism is determined to propagate itself. In the animal kingdom, this instinct to propagate overrules many other impulses, and this ability to copulate with more than one person is quite strong.

When You Are Most Vulnerable

At certain periods in one's life, the stresses of circumstances increase one's vulnerability to an extramarital fling. They are usually those points when one is feeling discouraged or especially needing affection. If the stress happens to occur at a time when the marriage is not going well, the danger is intensified...

Offit goes on to point out other situations that are unsettling and make it easier to turn to a new sexual experience for solace. They include any point when a woman or a man is

Changing jobs

Deciding on or beginning a new career

Heavily involved in expansion or success

Traveling extensively

Depressed by failure

Watching the children leave for college...

Perhaps the most common cause for slipping is boredom. No long-standing relationship can compete in excitement with a brand-new affair.

A vivacious young woman in her second marriage said to me, "I have everything. There is no reason for me to be unhappy, but I'm bored with my marriage and have this crazy infatuation for a man at church. What's wrong with me?!"

There's probably nothing wrong with her. She is being smitten with an impulse that comes to many people who are in the doldrums, an impulse that almost everyone who has loved one person for any length of time has had to wrestle down. I believe that the lure of the affair lies not so much in the nature of romance as in the nature of boredom...(p.159)

Decide whether you are bored with your mate or with yourself: If many affairs begin out of boredom, as I suggested earlier, it is important to determine whether your mate has really become uninteresting or whether you are bored with yourself and your life. If the answer is the latter, get busy making some changes. Almost any change. Perhaps you should think about a new career for the second half of your life or take up skydiving or sculpting.

If your basic ennui is with life itself, a new sexual partner will not help except for the short run. New, exciting partners have a way of becoming old, boring partners if the real problem is yourself...

Regulate your fantasy life. I once knew a famous religious figure who was caught in a sexual scandal, and everyone was shocked that this man could slip so badly. But a mutual friend who knew him well said that he was not at all surprised that it happened, and in fact expected it. I asked why he'd predicted such a thing? "Because I saw what he read," my friend replied. "I know what sort of magazines he bought at the airport when he left on a trip and the sort of movies he watched. It was inevitable that he would eventually act out those fantasies."

When Jesus tells us that if we lust after a woman we have already committed adultery with her, surely he is not saying that we are guilty of sin every time we have a sexual thought about someone outside our marriage. If so, many of us sin grievously every day. Rather, I think he was saying that anyone who fantasizes at length about extramarital sex is eventually going to live out the fantasy. He is simply saying that the thought is father of the deed, and if you think about any sin long enough, you may as well regard yourself as having committed it already, for you are certain to do so.

The computer people have a saying about their machines: "Garbage in, garbage out." The same truism applies to the mind. If you continue to fill it with trash novels and pornography, sooner or later your morals will break down under that constant bombardment (p.160-161)

Before we look at how to solve and not to solve conflicts in marriage I'd like to quote again from Cecil Osborne and his book "The Art of Understanding Your Mate" in which he talks about the three basic kinds of marital situations where there is trouble in the marriage. Cecil Osborne writes:

There are three basic kinds of marital situations: the impossible, the personal, and the situational. In dealing with couples who come to me for counseling I find it necessary to discover as soon as possible into which category their marriage falls.

I would define the "impossible" situation as one in which the two should never have married in the first place, and in which there appears to be little or no willingness on the part of one or both to make any significant change in their personalities or procedures.

I have dealt with many such persons, among them people either too young chronologically or too immature emotionally to grasp even the most fundamental principles of mutuality. I think of a young husband so sadistic and brutal that no woman in her right mind would have remained under the same roof with him; a young wife so neurotically attached to her father that no man could ever have measured up to her fantastic demands and expectations; a passive husband so deeply attached to his mother that he was incapable of forming any kind of a mature relationship with any other woman, and an emotionally dependent young woman whose jealousy bordered on the pathological, and who made life a continuous torture for her husband. Perhaps after years of psychotherapy, each of these could have become mature enough to have succeeded in marriage, but in each case these egocentric and immature personalities rejected any suggestion that they needed counseling. They all wanted someone to compel their marriage partners to conform to their neurotic demands

The second category of marital difficulties involves the "personal," that is, those individuals with personality problems who are sufficiently realistic to work toward the goal of greater emotional growth.

When such individuals are willing to undertake counseling or group therapy, their problems as individuals can usually be worked out. When they are mature enough to go to work on their own "islands of immaturity," their marriages can be made to function more smoothly. They can have, if not an ideal marriage, at least a satisfying and workable relationship.

The third category involves the "situational," where a husband and wife are basically mature, reasonably well suited to each other by temperament and background, but have not learned some of the important techniques by which daily issues are resolved (p.24-25).

Psychologists frequently use the word neurotic in classifying certain types of behaviour and people with those behaviours. The Macquarie Dictionary defines a neurosis as an "emotional disorder in which [there are] feelings of anxiety, obsessional thoughts, compulsive acts and physical complaints without [any] objective evidence of disease".

These type of compulsive(I must have or I must do) personality disorders occur in many people who are married. Cecil Osborne in his book "The Art of Understanding Your Mate" describes some of these personality disorders:

Types Of Neurotic Husbands

It is important to recognize that each of these eight behavior patterns is only a symptom of a basic underlying personality disorder. By attacking the symptom you will almost certainly make it worse.

1. The explosive, argumentative, domineering husband. This type of man has some deep-seated feelings of inferiority. He may have begun early in life to try to control his environment by shouting or by being overly argumentative. Because of immaturity he fears to let anyone become an equal, lest he feel overwhelmed and thus controlled. He must at all costs maintain his fictional superiority. He must always be right. He cannot endure the idea of having been wrong about anything.

Such a man tyrannizes and dominates through fear and sheer volume, or if somewhat quieter, through an intensive argumentativeness that seems never to end until he is confident that he has squelched all his adversaries. Emotional immaturity and insecurity are the basic difficulties in his case, and to argue back, to attack or criticize, only antagonizes him further. At whatever cost, however ridiculous or illogical he may sound, he feels he must maintain his alleged position of superiority. He will risk alienating family, friends, and fellow workers rather than admit an error; or, if he reserves his tirades for his family as some men do, he is willing to make a resounding idiot of himself rather than admit that anyone else could be right. He must be in charge, or his minuscule ego will collapse.

The argumentative, domineering husband, because of his great insecurity, is usually reluctant to undertake any sort of therapy. He tends to resist the idea of seeing a marriage counselor, for this implies the possibility of change on his part. To alter his basic behavior pattern poses a greater threat than he cares to face. However, if he can be induced to undertake some form of group therapy in a group situation which is not too threatening, he can gradually make some changes in his personality...

2. The compulsive. Compulsiveness takes many forms. One may be a compulsive eater, golfer, drinker, or television watcher. He may fall into the category of the compulsive worker, or be a compulsive talker.

Compulsiveness is a neurotic behavior problem which never—never!—yields to arguments, threats, pleas, tears, or any other form of persuasiveness. It is just what the name implies: a compulsion. Such a person feels literally compelled to act in a particular manner. You cannot shame a compulsive drinker or compulsive talker into changing. It is not that he is unwilling. He is unable. No one knows how many wives have learned to their sorrow that tears and threats are of no avail in dealing with a compulsive personality.

There is a basic insecurity involved in such an individual...Quite often a man who feels threatened by close personal contact or who feels badgered, criticised, or "hemmed in" will retreat to some activity in an effort to escape into a less threatening situation. He may be avoiding close relationships with his wife or children. He is unconsciously—or consciously—seeking a socially acceptable way of getting away from conflict or tension. This is more of an escape mechanism than a compulsion, but it can frustrate a wife who wants more of her husband's time and attention.

If a husband seems to fall into this escape category, a wife can ask herself what it is in their relationship or in the home which makes her husband feel unwanted, threatened, or simply uncomfortable. If he is attacked or criticized, degraded or ridiculed at home he may—if he is a passive type of individual—simply find some way of avoiding the situation. He can argue that he needs a hobby, that he must have some male companionship, or that he has work which must be finished. Instead of

demands, tears, or ultimatums the wife of such a man must find a way to make the home a place where he feels comfortable and at ease.

3.The uncommunicative husband. "My husband never talks to me," is a common complaint of wives. There are numerous categories into which such men fall:

(a) The passive, shy male. As a child he was encouraged to be seen and not heard or was dominated by overstrict parents. As an adult he finds himself literally unable to carry on an extended conversation.

He is at loss for words with which to express himself and is usually out of touch with his feelings. Whatever the original cause, such men cannot be compelled to communicate. They feel ill at ease and inadequate in trying to express themselves. The wife of one of these uncommunicative individuals generally must resign herself to the situation and find outlets for her social needs, unless the husband will undertake some long-range therapy.

(b) The "strong, silent" husband. His wife may have been attracted to him initially because she mistook his silence for "silent strength." He may, indeed have considerable inner strength which reveals itself on the job, yet be incapable of communicating at home.

At home he does not talk about things in which his wife is interested. This type of man usually is "thing oriented"; that is, he tends to deal rather exclusively with things or ideas and feels himself at a disadvantage when confronted with feelings. Usually he will feel threatened by any emotional upset, for he prefers things to run smoothly, with no emotional ups and downs. Wives of such men are often prone to push, test, or manipulate in an effort to get some kind of an emotional response. The husband then reacts with an angry outburst, silent withdrawal, or quiet hostility.

(c) The limited conversation husband. He is capable of carrying on a conversation about almost anything so long as it does not involve feelings. He is not uncommunicative. He will talk, but he finds it extremely difficult to talk about feelings or to share any emotions.

There is a sense in which we do not know a person until we know what he feels. A typical wife wants to know her husband at a feeling level, to know how he feels about himself, about life, about her. A man who is incapable of sharing feelings cannot be known. In fact, he fears to be known or to know himself. He finds it much safer to deal with things, concepts, and tangibles. He feels uncomfortable dealing with emotions.

(d) The "turned-off" husband. At one time, perhaps during courtship, there was considerable communication at a feeling level. Now he has grown morose, silent. This type of man is usually retreating from something he does not care to discuss. The wife may be a compulsive talker, and if her husband cannot turn her off, he can tune her out.

His wife observes that he talks easily with friends but is uncommunicative at home, and she feels hurt and rejected. He may feel unable to tell her honestly what the difficulty is, for fear of an endless argument. Some such husbands feel rejected sexually and respond with a cold aloofness. They respond to sexual rejection by rejecting their wives in other ways...

4. The child husband. This is the spoiled-child neurotic husband. In marriage he is seeking to recreate something similar to the relationship he had with his mother, from whom he was never fully able to detach himself. He is often passive and shuns responsibility. Such a personality is often the result of a weak or indifferent father and an overprotective mother.

He requires much attention and "mothering," when he is ill, and may be prone to numerous vague or specific ailments. He lacks a sense of masculine identity and sometimes goes to ridiculous lengths to prove himself and to others that he is truly masculine. He can be petulant when he does not get his way. He has an inferiority complex for which he attempts to compensate in various ways. Marriage to such a man can succeed if the wife is able and willing to take up where his mother left off. She will need to mother him, pamper him, and put up with his unreasonable demands until he can grow up...

5. The hypochondriac husband. This is usually a relatively harmless neurosis, so far as marriage is concerned, but the wife must be prepared to put up with a lifetime of pills, doctor's appointments, psychosomatic ills, and physical complaints.

Such a man is no more to be blamed for this condition than a person is to be condemned for any other neurotic behavior pattern. We are each the product of early environment. It is utterly fruitless to try to argue a hypochondriac out of his obsessive attention to ill fitness. Logic has little or no effect upon a neurotic behavior pattern. Unless the pattern is seriously disruptive, the wife of such a man would do well to say to herself, "I'll live with his pill bottles and physical complaints, and he can learn to live with some of my peculiarities." An amused, loving tolerance is a far better approach than the judgmental attitude..

[6]. The playboy husband. This interesting specimen may still be a boy at heart, resenting or resisting adult responsibilities. One such husband neglected his family responsibilities in favor of pursuing his hobby of motorcycle racing. Another collected and tinkered with old cars. One whom I counseled pursued his hobby of hunting and fishing to the neglect of his family. Still another, representative of many, pursued women. He needed to confirm his masculinity by making as many conquests as possible. He could handle his lack of masculine identity only by having a series of affairs with numerous women.

One typical philanderer had a collection of guns, which he seldom used, a boat he used only twice, a vast assortment of fishing rods, though he never went fishing. These were simply masculinity symbols. He engaged in an endless series of affairs with various women until his frustrated wife ended the marriage. His male identity was so weak that he was emotionally incapable of any sustained relationship with one woman.[There are many men out there who have a serious problem with sexual addiction. They are addicted to the pleasure much in the same way drug addicts are hooked on their drugs. Such a person needs counseling to help him get over compulsive addiction.]

Tinkering with the symptoms is usually fruitless. Emotional and spiritual growth is the only solution, and unless a husband with such a problem is willing to get help, there is little hope for the marriage.

[7]. The neurotic tightwad. The husband who seeks to control his wife or family with money is using the weapon he knows and loves best. He is, like most of the

others in these categories, an extremely insecure individual, and money has become his chief source of security. He uses it to control those about him.

A typical man of this type thought nothing of spending a hundred and fifty dollars on a suit for himself, but doled out a totally inadequate amount to clothe his wife and children. He demanded an accounting of every dime he handed out. He had grown up in extreme poverty and was resolved that he would never again suffer from a lack of money. Understandably, his neurotic behavior alienated his family. He was quite willing to endure their hostility rather than part with any of the money which, as it turned out, was ultimately divided between his wife and himself when the marriage finally ended in divorce.

A confirmed tightwad is not necessarily mean. He is frightened of being without money. He can no more be argued out of his neurosis than one can be talked out of being five-feet-eight. It is an almost ineradicable part of his nature. Psychotherapy could help such a person, but the tightwad will seldom part with the money necessary to achieve a cure he doesn't want.

How To Live With A Neurotic Husband

We all marry an ideal. During courtship we each present to the other our best side. The ancient statement that love is blind is essentially true. The flow of pink sex hormones shuts off the flow of oxygen to the brain. This is almost literally the case, for during courtship we are "in love with love," and we tend to idealize the loved one, magnifying the virtues and minimizing the personality defects. There is a glow, an expectancy, a kind of euphoria which short-circuits the cortex, where rational judgment takes place. Then reality sets in. The euphoria disappears soon after the wedding veil is laid aside and the honeymoon is over. NOW begins the task of working out a satisfactory marriage relationship.

A neurotic husband (and of course everyone is neurotic to some degree) needs precisely the very thing his wife feels incapable of giving him—loving tolerance. At the time he is the most unreasonable he is in need of the greatest amount of understanding and patience. When his ego has been bruised and he takes out his accumulated frustrations on his wife or children, he is in need of unconditional love, something that is difficult to give to an unreasonable, demanding, or hostile person.

Remember that his actions are not "thought out." They are compulsive, as are all neurotic reactions. He does not know why he does or says what he does any more than a child who is having tantrums. Almost any negative response will cause him to feel even more unloved. His unreasonable or frustrating actions evoke in his wife such a feeling of resentment that she is too busy hating him to give him the very thing he needs most, which is love.

He will not sound rational or reasonable simply because he is reacting emotionally in an effort to protect himself and keep his ego intact. If he is in need of nurturing, some form of tenderness, he feels instinctively that he cannot reveal his need lest he seem to be weak. He may, in consequence, respond to his wife with anger or retreat in silent rejection. He is usually not conscious of the fact that what he really needs is to be loved; by acting as he does he makes his wife less able to respond with affection.

It is difficult for many people to accept, but the truth is that the basic need of a woman is for security, and the fundamental need of the male is for affection. Her need for security may involve much more than material possessions. She can be made to feel

secure by the knowledge that she is loved and cherished that her husband is strong enough to take care of her, that he can be depended upon. She often tests unconsciously just to make sure that he has the strength she needs.

He, on the other hand, has a basic and fundamental need for affection. Some men feel embarrassed by outward demonstrations of affection, but the need is still there. He is desperately in need of tenderness, affection, gentleness, though the forms in which men can accept these emotional offerings varies greatly with the individual.

A neurotic husband, frustrated in his work may be unable to share his anxieties with his wife for fear of appearing weak. As a result he may turn to excessive drinking or abusive conduct, or seek to bolster his weakened ego by some kind of flirtation. He may seek refuge in sickness, the bottle, an affair, or in some kind of frenzied activity which gives him temporary relief.

To point out to him how irrational his behavior has become will only intensify his anger or self-rejection. His wife's arguments or admonitions remind him of his mother's exhortations about his homework or household chores. It is worse than futile to argue with a neurotic husband. The wife of such a man feels instinctively that her marriage is failing, and she usually begins to show him how wrong he is. A far more creative approach is to give him as much love and affection as possible and discover some outside activities for herself. If she feels neglected because of his neurotic or unreasonable behavior, she will feel tempted to point out that he has not taken her anywhere in weeks or months; that she has needs, too; that their marriage is falling apart; that they should see a marriage counselor—with the result that he either retreats still further into his silence or seeks to justify himself.

Women in general tend to want to engage in activities with their husbands. They like doing things together. Some husbands find home and hearth and television a safe refuge from a hectic or threatening world and seem uninterested in going out as often as their wives would like. Arguments are usually futile since they imply a judgment or criticism. A far better approach, if there is no other solution, is for the wife to find some activities of her own in which she can engage. If she cannot have a perfect marriage, she can have a satisfying one. Millions of unmarried women would settle for a poor marriage—"Even a warm body in the house, someone to talk to, would be better than the loneliness I endure," as one unmarried woman put it.

Besides, a husband is more likely to respond to a cheerful wife who has been busy with her own interest outside the home, than to a nagging wife. It is never a matter of who is right, but rather how to work out a creative relationship.

Some husbands, as opposed to the silent retreating type, play the game of "uproar." As the result of accumulated tensions they unconsciously feel a need to keep everything in a turmoil. One such husband vented his daily accumulation of anxieties by shouting at the children at dinner, correcting their eating habits and their grammar. He challenged their opinions and shouted them down. "Dinnertime at our house is sheer hell," his wife complained. "What can you do with such a man?"

Argument with a person in that frame of mind is fruitless. In fact, it is fatal. The wife of a neurotic husband must learn not to argue or attack when he is erupting. Later, when he is calmer, she can talk with him, making sure that she does not sound critical.

A wife came in for a counseling session and stated that she was just about ready to end her marriage which had become intolerable. Her husband had refused to come with her. "If things do not get better, I want out," she said.

She was quite serious about her intent, so I said, "You have three choices: You can end your marriage now; you can continue with counseling and endeavor to sort out your emotions, in the hope that he may respond to some changes in you; you can, if you prefer, tell him that you intend getting a divorce unless the two of you together can see a counselor and work out a better relationship." She thought about it for a week or two, and at a subsequent session said, "I've told him, quietly but firmly, that unless he is willing to work at this marriage as hard as I am, I want a divorce. He finally agreed to come with me for a counseling session next week, but I don't think it will do any good. He's hostile and argumentative. He'll come once and that'll be it."

The two of them came in a few days later, and we had a reasonably good discussion. I encouraged them both to take a psychological test in order to discover areas of their personality in need of attention. He readily agreed, for to him it seemed less personal, and consequently less threatening. Both took one of the basic psychological tests and for eleven weeks each was given an evaluation slip, indicating some area of their personalities in need of attention. The weekly slips focused attention upon their own individual personality defects and they ceased arguing about who was right or wrong. Each discovered eleven things they needed to undertake in order to achieve a better marriage.

He reported, "You know, after that first session things seemed to calm down at home. I guess we got out some of the tension. Anyway, I can see some sense to this counseling business. It has helped already."

In their weekly sessions with me they each talked about their own individual slips. No one was being accused, and they did not find the evaluations too painful since they were simply the result of their own personality inventory. They worked out a thoroughly satisfactory marriage...

Types Of Neurotic Wives

1. The overly dominant wife. The term dominant as used here does not necessarily imply "domineering." One can possess a dominant personality without being domineering. Dominance, as a personality characteristic, simply means an inner need to control other people or one's surroundings. This tendency can be expressed overtly or subtly, suppressed or channeled into creative activity.

All of us feel safer when we can control our environment and those about us; there are many ways by which we seek to do this. Some wives use a heavy hand and a loud voice. Others, who are quieter, may control through manipulation. Some women unconsciously seek to control those about them through the use of illness, real or imaginary, or they may achieve their goal by creating guilty feelings in others...

It is important to remember that a controlling wife is seldom fully aware, if at all, of her dominance. She may think of herself as self-sacrificing and filled with love. Her feeling is, "If you really loved me, you'd do as I say." Failure to accede to all of her wishes is interpreted by her as a lack of love or consideration.

With a part of her nature such a wife wants a strong, loving, tender, dominant male. Another part of her wants her own way, and she feels unloved or rejected if she meets with any resistance.

2. The narcissistic woman. A narcissistic person is one who has an inordinate self-love. She is unduly preoccupied with her face, her body, and often with her own interests, which she perceives as an extension of herself.

Women who are possessed of great beauty often have difficulty achieving emotional maturity. They become accustomed, early in life, to receiving compliments on their beauty. It becomes their sole stock in trade. They have heard so often, as children, how beautiful they are that they come to feel that the world owes them a continual stream of compliments. Self-centeredness, narcissism, results. They learn to expect praise as their due...

The supreme law, as given us by Jesus, is to love God with all our hearts and to love others as we love ourselves. This includes, of course, a proper self-love, as opposed to a neurotic preoccupation with oneself which excludes others. A narcissistic woman constantly seeks to be the centre of attention. She seeks flattery and is engaged in a constant battle for popularity. She is sometimes a "psychic scalp collector", flirting with men in order to prove to herself that she has not lost her attractiveness. She uses men, including her husband...

A narcissistic preoccupation with her own needs had blinded her to the fact that one must give in marriage, as well as receive.

3. The adult-infantile wife. I knew her first as a sweet, charming high school girl. She was perhaps overly compliant, but her behavior gave no indication of the terribly neurotic wife she became. She was married at nineteen to a handsome young man, and they settled down in a small apartment. During the first year or two of marriage she showed signs of depression and became petulant and demanding. Her adolescent dreams of unending romance were not being fulfilled by her gentle, rather unimaginative husband. His income was meager and they could not afford all of the luxuries of which she had dreamed. Their tiny apartment, and a few courses at junior college, did not give her enough to occupy her mind.

She became more and more demanding. In bewilderment he listened to her angry tirades about his modest income. When her outbursts became violent he brought her in for a conference. Instead of the sweet high school girl I had known, I found a hostile, demanding, utterly unreasonable young woman who had seemingly regressed back to childhood. She pouted, wept, demanded, threatened. The childishness of her demands appalled her stunned husband. She wanted she said, to be taken care of, to have luxuries like other people. She wanted them now. I asked her to describe specifically what she expected her husband to provide for her. The list was astounding and utterly ridiculous. She had obviously become emotionally ill and was in need of intensive therapy. It required three years of intensive private therapy before she was able to achieve a degree of emotional maturity and lead a normal life...

On a lesser scale, many an adult-infantile wife manifests an emotional immaturity which makes life intolerable for a husband. Marriage does not solve emotional problems. It compounds them. Many a woman of twenty or forty is still emotionally unprepared for the role of wife. The infant within the adult is still making unreasonable demands, still expecting instant fulfillment of every wish. When an emotionally immature woman or man is married, the prognosis

for a successful marriage is poor, unless the immature partner is willing to undertake a fairly long-range effort to grow up emotionally.

4. The masculine-protest wife. The term "masculine-protest" was first used by Carl Gustav Jung to describe a fairly large group of women who experience an unconscious ambivalence toward men. They love and hate them at the same time. The feelings are usually unconscious. A man married to such a woman is always engaged in a struggle for power. If he gives in she is jubilant but she also feels defeated because he was not strong enough to stand up to her.

"Men are so weak and ineffectual!" she will then say. Such a woman is basically argumentative, and will provoke an argument usually in an unconscious effort to keep the power struggle going.

The masculine protest stems from any of the following or a mixture of them:

(a) A father or brother who was idealized. No man will ever be able to measure up to the idealized male, who epitomizes what all men should be like.

(b) A weak, ineffectual, or alcoholic father whom the woman learned to despise as a girl. Hating the father, she unconsciously despises all men, or feels a need to punish all men for the failures of her father.

(c) An overly strict or domineering father can instill in a daughter the fear of being controlled. She wants a strong husband, but if he reminds her in any way of the father whom she feared, she may experience a "fear-anger" reaction and feel a need to attack. Or, if she is passive, she can become subtly manipulative. If her husband exhibits any of the undesirable traits of her father, whom she may have consciously loved and unconsciously rejected, she can react with unreasoning hostility.

All of these reactions, of course, are entirely unconscious. She can justify herself on a logical basis, but her problem is rooted in a deeply buried hostility toward men. Unfortunately, her children often become the targets of hostility which is really felt toward her husband.

Such women are often frigid, both emotionally and sexually. They are caught in a web not of their own making. A competent marriage counselor, or group therapy, can often provide valuable insights leading toward a solution.

5. The martyr-wife. The martyr-type is known technically as masochistic. That is, such individuals are unconsciously seeking punishment. They may be accident-prone, operation-prone, or simply prone to exercise bad judgment in an unconscious effort to be defeated in life. Unable to find happiness or fulfillment in life, they derive a kind of obstinate satisfaction from the attention they get from being ill or depressed or in trouble of some kind. They cannot endure success or happiness, which they are consciously seeking...

There is another type of martyr who does not resort to such extreme measures. Her attention-getting device is simply that of verbal complaints. She is never satisfied. She plays a quiet game of "poor unfortunate me" in an unconscious effort to get attention. Attention is fourth cousin to love, which she is incapable of accepting.

If she cannot get love, she will accept sympathy. If that is denied her, she will welcome pity. If she is the "uncomplaining martyr," she will suffer in silence, piteously waiting

for some form of attention. If she is the "voluble, overtalkative" type she will turn any conversation into a recital of her ills. It is her sole stock in trade.

6. The passive-aggressive wife. No one is all "this" or "that." We all have various conflicting tendencies operating within us, usually at a totally unconscious level. A passive-aggressive person is just what the term implies—both passive and submissive, with aggressive and hostile tendencies.

Belle was such a wife. Her aggressiveness took the form of seeking to control her husband and children, always for their own good, of course. As is often the case, because she was more aggressive than passive, she married a passive man. He was not as adept at handling finances as she, and she went to great pains to show him how inadequate he was. She was argumentative, overtalkative, with a kind of impatient tolerance for the weaknesses of her husband. When she had prodded him into a rage, she would become passive and retreat. Unable to have children, she had proposed to her husband that they adopt several. He refused. She persisted, but without results. He was firm in his refusal.

She could not induce him to join a group or come in for counseling, so she came in alone over a period of several months. It became apparent that she was "aggressive-passive," while her husband was "passive-aggressive." That is, she was more aggressive, with passive tendencies, while he was basically passive, but could erupt into violent rages when pushed too far. There had been one particularly ugly experience in which she had prodded him beyond endurance and he struck her.

Over a period of several weeks we worked on just one thing: how to live with the particular male she had married, without loss of integrity or loss of her identity. She came to see, in time, what she had been doing that provoked his rages. We discovered what his "red buttons" were and how she could avoid pushing them. At first she felt that this would involve loss of identity, if she couldn't say everything she felt. I offered her the New Testament concept: "Speaking the truth in love" (Eph. 4:15), and added that it is not necessary or wise to say everything we think, at all times. As a compulsive talker, she found this difficult to grasp, but she did in time.

One day she came in looking radiantly happy. "Guess what! Things have been going a lot better since I learned not to push his red buttons, and yesterday right out of the blue, he said, 'Honey, you've always wanted to adopt some kids. I've decided that it might be a good idea. Let's do it.' I never thought he'd reverse himself so completely. He means it, too. I think he's just been resisting the idea of children because he's resenting my pushing and prodding. Now that I've let up, he's different in a lot of ways."

In most marriages there is, to some degree, a power struggle going on. It may be so subtle that neither is consciously aware of it, or it may erupt in frequent displays of temper. The struggle for mastery tends to disappear when honest, open communication can be established. "Love does not insist on its own way," declares Paul in his second letter to the Corinthians (13:15). When we truly love one another, we cease to seek having our own needs met and endeavor to discover how we can meet the needs of the other person. Ultimately, as a result, our own needs are usually met. "Love never ends," Paul concludes (I Cor. 13:8).

7. The jealous-possessive wife. Jealousy knows no sex. It afflicts both men and women. Everyone is capable of jealousy in some degree. God said to Israel, "I am a jealous God," meaning that He wanted to be their only God. The marriage

ceremony contains the words, "Forsaking all others." The goal is for each to give complete loyalty and love to the other.

It is only when jealousy turns rancid that it becomes a neurotic manifestation. Overly possessive jealousy usually springs from a deep-seated insecurity. The case of Jeanne illustrates this type in its milder form. When she was quite young her father abandoned the family. Jeanne grew into a beautiful and charming young woman and married a man who became highly successful in business. She was poised and was loved by everyone who knew her, but the emotional scar caused by her father's disappearance revealed itself in her marriage. Her husband made frequent business trips around the country, and each time he returned home his wife questioned him for the next few days about his activities while away from home. It was done in a fairly subtle manner.

"And what did you do on Monday night, dear?" she would ask casually. He would try to recall and tell her. An hour or so later she would inquire, "And how did things go on Tuesday evening? Did you meet anyone interesting?" After this type of questioning would go on intermittently for several days, he would explode in irritation. "How can you expect me to recall every event that transpired during a perfectly routine business trip? Do you want me to carry a diary?" Despite the fact that he had never given her the slightest cause to doubt him, she kept this up during the forty-five years of their married life. Without at all understanding the origin of her jealousy, he managed to live with it.

A husband who shows a faint interest in a woman at a social function can arouse the most intense jealousy in an insecure wife. If she is pathologically jealous, like Katherine, the marriage can be threatened. Katherine's jealousy and possessiveness were so intense that if Jack came home an hour later than usual, he was always subjected to a barrage of questions. When he casually mentioned the name of some woman in the office where he worked, she insisted on knowing what their relationship was, what she looked like, how often he saw her...

A wife who is beset by extreme jealousy must first realize that this springs out of a deep sense of insecurity, and second, that to give way to this possessiveness will almost certainly drive a husband farther away. It can become almost a self-fulfilling prophecy, whereby the fear of losing one's husband becomes a reality through focusing upon the fear.

8. The depressed wife. There are different kinds of depression, and different degrees. Most humans experience occasional depressed moods at one time or another. Unhappy events or disappointments can cause mild depression, which tends to vanish in time. Some depression originates in a chemical imbalance or as the result of physical illness. Varying emotional states accompany the monthly cycle for many women, and most husbands learn, if they are at all perceptive, not to react to an emotional outburst at such a time.

There is one type of depression common to many wives about which a husband can do something constructive. A young mother with three small children came to see me in a highly emotional state. She had made the rounds of doctors, one of whom prescribed iron and vitamin shots. Another gave her tranquilizers, and a third urged her to "snap out of it."

She told me that she was depressed much of the time, irritable with the children, and cried easily. She alternated between talking jags and depression so deep that she felt she could not even carry on a conversation with her husband.

Since physicians could find nothing organically wrong with her, and tranquilizers helped hardly at all, I surmised that she was suffering from nothing more acute than simple emotional and physical fatigue. She had her small children with her from twelve to fourteen hours a day. Her husband worked eight hours a day, came home and rested. I urged her to take a vacation from husband and children. "Every mother of small children," I told her, "deserves a day off every week. In your case I'd urge you to take a three or four day vacation now and take off a full day once a week." Like most emotionally upset and depressed persons, all she could see were difficulties. I helped her work these out, and she went away for a few days' rest. She returned looking and feeling wonderful. I urged her to get off by herself, or with a friend, one day a week, quoting to her "Six days you shall labor..." (Ex. 20:9). I pointed out to her that she could trade with another mother, and that if she had to pay for a sitter, the ultimate cost would be much less than weekly sessions with a psychiatrist over a period of months or years. In her case it worked.

Many husbands have no conception of what is involved in having one or more children underfoot ten to fifteen hours a day, unless they have taken over for a day or two when the mother is ill. Some husbands of working wives expect their wives to work all day and do housework until far into the night with little or no assistance.

But there are also wives who become professional moaners. Marriage is not just what they had dreamed it would be. Housework becomes an endless round of meaningless monotony to them. And indeed, much housework is just plain janitor work, and for a more active personality it can lack meaning. A wife who feels unfulfilled can become depressed and create an atmosphere in the home that makes the husband wish he were somewhere else. Creating the right emotional climate in the home is chiefly a wife's responsibility to discover what he can do to help her create a wholesome atmosphere.

A depressed, demanding, possessive, complaining wife—who may indeed have much to complain about—is setting the stage for marital discord. If she can without anger or threats, make her needs known, she stands a better chance of working out a satisfactory marriage. If she cannot do this alone and unaided, she needs the help of a marriage counselor or some qualified person who can aid her in sorting out her feelings and finding a creative solution(p.185-214).

HOW TO HANDLE MARITAL CONFLICTS

To begin this section on resolving marital conflict I'd like to quote from an article entitled "How to Handle Marital Conflicts" by Samuele Bacchiochi. He writes:

Some conflicts, as we have just seen, are inevitable in every marriage because no two persons have exactly the same personalities, attitudes, and values. Some of the differences do not come to light until the couple has been married for some time. When the differences appear, some conflicts are bound to arise.

There is nothing wrong with conflicts, provided they serve a constructive purpose by improving communication and strengthening marital relationships. Sometimes

conflicts can bring smoldering resentments to surface, which, left unresolved, can destroy a marriage or at least cost the psychic health of one or both partners.

Conflicts, per se, are not necessarily bad or sinful. It is the way conflicts are handled that determines their impact on the marriage relationship. Conflicts may destroy a marriage, but they may also strengthen it. A successful Christian marriage is not necessarily one in which there are no conflicts, but rather one in which the partners have learned to resolve their differences openly, honestly, and constructively.

Unfortunately, in many instances, conflicts are detrimental to the marriage relationship because they become a way to attack, wound, and diminish the other partner. When a couple engages in name-calling, ridiculing, and belittling each other, the result will only widen the gap between them. To prevent conflicts from deteriorating into an all-out war, it is important to observe the seven basic rules outlined below. These rules, if obeyed, will enable a Christian couple to handle their conflicts constructively, turning them into opportunities for removing obstacles to a stronger marriage.

1. Be Committed to Preserve Your Marriage Covenant

The first rule in handling marital conflicts successfully is to be totally committed to preserving your marriage covenant. It is only within the context of a loving and irrevocable commitment that marital conflicts can be successfully resolved. When couples are determined not to let anything or anyone put asunder the marital unions established by God (Matt 19:6), they can risk being honest and open in discussing their differences.

If we are deeply committed to preserving our marriage covenants, we will not allow any issue to divide us. We will not permit any argument to degenerate into a hostile confrontation. We will not waste our time quarreling over things we cannot change.

There are many differences in marriage that by God's grace can be overcome, but there are also inherited or acquired characteristics which we cannot change. There is no point in my wife's criticizing me for my baldness or for my heavy Italian accent. Similarly, there is no point for my criticizing my wife for the shape of her nose or for the extra pounds she has gained since we got married almost thirty years ago. Being committed to preserving our marriage covenant means to ask God to make us willing to accept what we cannot change, to give us courage to change what needs to be changed, and to give us wisdom to know the difference.

A total commitment is only possible by divine grace. It is God that gives us the power to hold fast to our commitments. God is interested in our marriages. He not only joins our lives together, but He is helping us stay together when conflicts arise. He wants us to enjoy happy, harmonious marriage relationships. He will move heaven and earth, if necessary, to resolve any conflicts that may arise in our relationships. But He needs our cooperation.

We must take God as our partner into our marriage relationships by keeping the fire ever burning on the altar of our daily worship. We must begin and close each day praying together, renewing our commitment to God and to each other. We must ask God daily for the enabling power of the Holy Spirit to be truthful, kind, patient and understanding toward each other. The couple that prays

together stays together. As our love for God increases, our love for one another will grow stronger and our capacity to resolve conflicts will become greater.

2. Be Honest and Fair in Handling the Conflict

A second important rule in handling marital conflicts is to be honest and fair. Couples who are committed to preserving their marriage covenants will not engage in "dirty fighting," hitting below the belt, or lying to win the argument.

Paul alludes to this principle in Ephesians 4:25 where he says: "Therefore, putting away falsehood, let everyone speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another." The verses that follow contain other significant principles to be considered. The particular tense used in Greek for "putting away falsehood" (aorist participle) conveys the idea of something already done at a specific point in time. Thus, a literal translation would read: "Having put away falsehood, let everyone speak truthfully with his neighbor."

Applied to a marriage relation, this text challenges husbands and wives who have laid aside falsehood from their lives and relationships to speak truthfully to one another when conflicts arise. It is essential for a couple to commit themselves to an honest relationship so that when conflicts develop, they will not fall into the trap of lying to each other just to win the argument.

From the very beginning of their relationship, a couple should commit themselves to being totally honest with each other. They need to say: "Let us not try to kid one another by playing games. I promise to be honest with you and I want you to be honest with me. If a conflict occurs, let us not resort to unfair practices to win."

The object of conflict should not be not to find fault or to assess blame but to resolve problems. Marriage is not a competitive sport but a cooperative endeavor. When a problem occurs, the goal should not be to determine who is right and who is wrong, but to find a satisfactory solution. "The attitude of partners," as Stephen Grunlan puts it, "should not be a win/lose approach; that is, every solution involving a winner and a loser. Rather, the attitude of partners should be a win/win approach. The couple faces the problem together and when a solution is found, they both win."

When the concern of spouses is for each to win the argument, ultimately, they both become losers: first, because they will often resort to unfair tactics to win, and second, because the outcome of the conflict will be a weaker relationship where feelings of resentment and bitterness remain and eventually lead to new confrontations. Thus, it is most important for a couple to handle conflicts with honesty and fairness, seeking the best solution to a problem, regardless of whose idea it is.

3. Keep Your Anger Under Control

Besides being committed to honesty and fairness in handling conflicts in marriage, the third rule is to keep your anger under control. Paul alludes to this principle in Ephesians 4:26 where he says: "Be angry but do not sin."

We noticed that in the preceding verse Paul exhorts us to speak truthfully to one another. This does not mean that a Christian should never feel or express anger.

Rather it means that truthful persons will not allow their anger to become undisciplined and uncontrolled.

Something essential would be missing in a marital partner who is unable to feel or express anger. Obviously, there must be a right kind of anger. There are situations where a partner will be aroused to the point of indignation by overt wrongs committed by the other partner. A marriage covenant would lose its meaning if, for example, spouses would not become angry at the infidelity of their partners. This verse tells us that there is a place in the Christian life for righteous indignation. God says: "I permit you to be angry, but don't let your anger lead you to sin."

We all know that anger becomes sinful when is expressed through outbursts of temper, profane or insulting language, or physical violence. Uncontrolled anger can become a deadly weapon which must be banished from the Christian life. But the anger which is disciplined, selfless, and pure, can be a great moral force in the world. This world would have lost much without the righteous indignation of Jesus against human hypocrisy (Mark 3:5; John 2:13-17).

As sinful creatures, we are all subject to feelings of pride, selfishness, fatigue, and anxiety which sometimes break out in uncontrolled outbursts of anger and irritation. This ugly side of our nature is revealed especially in marriage, the place where we can safely blow off our steam and release our frustrations. At home, we can safely unload our temper, anger, and tensions. Our angry outbursts, offensive remarks, and sharp retort wound our partners who may also reveal their ugly nature by retaliating with similar outbursts of rancor.

Angry words, once spoken even unintentionally, are deadly weapons that can wound and crush our mates permanently. Just as God's word does not return empty but accomplishes its purpose (Is 55:11), so our words will accomplish their purpose, even when we wish that they would not.

A man who in a moment of anger tells his wife, "Let's face it, I do not feel like loving you anymore," will inflict upon her a permanent wound. So does the cutting remark, "No wonder you act so irresponsibly. Your father died in a mental hospital." Such cutting words cannot be easily forgotten. Your mate may later say, "I forgive you," but deep inside, the hurt caused by those words may never be healed. Angry words can gradually break that inner covenant bond that holds marriages together. It is therefore, essential to learn by divine grace to keep our anger under control.

If a conflict gets out of control in our marriage, the only way to still the storm is for the more spiritually mature partner to break the cycle of mutual attack by refusing to retaliate for the hurt received. This is the only way to bring to an end a marital fight.

4. Choose an Appropriate Time to Discuss a Problem

This leads us to consider a fourth rule which is to choose an appropriate time to discuss a problem. The wise man Solomon notes that there is "a time to keep silence, and a time to speak...a time for war, and a time for peace" (Eccl 3:7-8). This is certainly true of marital conflicts. Marriage counselors agree that timing is critical to constructive resolution of conflicts.

George Gach and Peder Wyden write: "Far too many fights become needlessly aggravated because the complaint opens fire when his partner really is in an inappropriate frame of mind or is trying to dash off to work or trying to concentrate on some long-delayed chore that he has finally buckled down to. Indeed there are times when failure to delay - or to advance - the timing of a fight can have cataclysmic consequences."

There may be times when an issue has to be resolved immediately. In most cases, however, conflicts develop over a period of time and can be temporarily put off until an appropriate time. This is the procedure followed in most organizations, and it should be followed in marriage.

A basic rule to remember regarding the timing for discussing problems is to avoid raising them just before anything that will not provide adequate time to satisfactorily deal with them. For example, the time just before a meal, just before going to bed, just before making love, just before going to work, or just before going to church, is inappropriate for dealing with unpleasant disagreements.

The best time to discuss sensitive issues or serious differences is when both husband and wife are well rested, wide awake and feeling at ease. At such favorable times one can be more rational, considerate, and accommodating. A wise husband or wife who knows the importance of proper timing for discussing serious and disagreeable things will say, "I don't think this is the best time to discuss this matter. Why don't we deal with it later on when the children are in bed or after we have rested!" Having said this, we must set a time and keep the appointment.

Another important rule regarding timing is not to prolong the discussion unduly. Anger, conflicts, and negative feelings must be resolved as soon as possible because the longer we postpone mending a conflict, the more difficult it will be to resolve it later.

Paul emphasizes this important rule in Ephesians 4:26-27, saying: "Do not let the sun go down on your anger, and give no opportunity to the devil." This means that we must never go to sleep with bitter feelings or thoughts against our partners. If there has been a conflict during the day or in the evening, we must make peace and banish any lingering negative feelings before we go to sleep. The longer we allow bitter feelings to flourish, the more difficult it will be to eradicate them later.

5. Stick to the Issue at Hand

A fifth important rule to remember in handling marital conflicts is to stick to the issue at hand. When a couple chooses an appropriate time to discuss a certain problem (rule four), they should use that time to address that particular issue and not to bring up all their past problems.

Stephen Grunlan relates the story of a woman who complained to her friend that her husband became historical every time they had an argument. "Her friend corrected her by saying, 'You mean he becomes hysterical.' 'No,' replied the woman, 'I mean historical. Whenever we have an argument, he brings up every related problem since we have been married.'"

Marriage counselors emphasize the importance of sticking to the issue at hand. Dragging past grievances into the matter under discussion will hinder the resolution

of the immediate conflict. It may also open old wounds and thus aggravate the situation.

Sticking to the issue also involves avoiding sweeping generalization and accusation. The following argument will serve to illustrate this point:

Husband: You left the lawn mower out in the backyard yesterday and now the motor is soaked from last night's rain. When will you ever learn to put things away in the proper place.

Wife: Look who is talking. You leave your shoes all over the house, and I have to pick them up and put them away all the time.

In this argument, the lawn mower is generalized and used as a pretext to launch a sweeping accusation. The wife defends herself by launching a counterattack totally unrelated to the issue involved. The end result is that a minor incident can turn into a hostile confrontation. How different the outcome would have been if the husband had stuck to the original issue and the wife had been willing to accept responsibility. Imagine the conversation going something like this:

Husband: Honey, did you know that you left the lawn mower out in the backyard yesterday, and the motor got soaked with rain last night?

Wife: Oh no! I completely forgot to bring in the lawn mower. I'm sorry. Will you be able to get the motor started now?

Husband: I think so, but I will have to pull out the spark plug and dry it. I hope you won't leave the lawn mower out again.

Wife: No, I'll be sure to bring it in next time. I'm sorry for causing you extra work.

Husband: No problem. Just remember it next time.

This conversation brings a happy ending to the incident of the lawn mower, leaving the question of the shoes for another discussion. The husband disciplines himself by sticking to the issue of the lawn mower while the wife acknowledges her responsibility. An apology and forgiveness settles the issue. Minor incidents such as this can be easily resolved when partners stick to the issue and acknowledge responsibility. Failure to do so can cause minor problems to balloon into serious altercations.

6. Listen Carefully and Speak Tactfully

Closely related to a responsible attitude of sticking to the issue at hand (rule five) is rule six: listen carefully to the words of your mate and speak tactfully. Conflicts in marriage should serve to improve communication by helping partners know better how each feels and thinks about an issue.

Communication presupposes listening. Learning to listen carefully to the words of a mate is essential in handling conflicts. Yet, this rule of effective listening is most difficult to implement because in a conflict situation when a person is talking, the other is not listening but is thinking about how to respond. The louder our voices and the uglier our words, the less our spouses will listen and the poorer will be our communication.

It is important to listen carefully to understand what the real issue is. For example, a husband may complain over the fact that his wife bought a new vacuum cleaner rather than having the old one repaired. In reality, what he may be complaining about is the fact that his wife did not consult him. He may fear that his wife does not think that he is responsible for the home. Or a wife may complain that her husband spends little time with her when what she really means is that her husband does not seem to care enough for her.

When a couple argues and fights, they need to make sure that they understand what they are really fighting about. This is possible only by learning to listen carefully to each other and to ask questions that may help uncover those hidden feelings which are the cause of the conflict.

Understanding the issue through careful listening and questioning is the first important step. Equally important is the next step of speaking tactfully and graciously. Paul expresses this principle in Ephesians 4:29, saying: "Let no evil talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for edifying, as fits the occasion, that it may impart grace to those who hear."

A Christian is called upon to refrain from harsh, evil speaking and to engage instead in edifying speech which imparts grace and encouragement to others. This requires learning to be courteous and tactful in our speaking. Tact involves being sincere and open while at the same time showing respect for the other person's feelings, and being careful not to hurt them unnecessarily. Christ is our perfect example of tactfulness and courtesy even toward His persecutors. As His followers we should manifest the same attitude, especially toward our family members.

True courtesy and tactfulness in speech is not learned merely by practising a few rules of etiquette, but through a renewal of the heart. It is only when the heart has been touched by the love of Christ that people will feel motivated to listen carefully and to speak tactfully to all, especially to their marital partners.

7. Be Willing to Forgive and to Forget

The success of the preceding six rules in resolving marital conflicts is largely dependent upon the seventh rule which is to be willing to forgive and to forget the wrongs of your mate.

Ideally, marital conflicts should always be handled in a controlled and rational way, leading to greater communication between mates. Realistically, however, in every marriage there are times when conflicts become uncontrolled and irrational. There are situations, when because of fatigue, pride, selfishness, anxiety, the ugly side of our nature breaks out in angry outbursts, cutting remarks, abusive language, or irrational accusations. Such behavior awakens the equally ugly side in our mates who may retaliate similarly with angry and abusive language.

The only way to bring a conflict which has gotten out of control to a satisfactory end, is for one partner to break the retaliation cycle by forgiving the other partner for the hurt received. In Christian marriages forgiveness must be patterned after the forgiveness Christ offers us. He forgives us in spite of the pain and sorrow we have caused Him. On the cross, Christ forgave those who crucified Him, saying: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34). When we forgive, we acknowledge that we have suffered a real wrong which by God's grace we choose to forget.

In a covenant marriage, we recognize the sin that our mates have committed against us. We do not explain away the sinful behaviour of our mate by saying, "He did not mean what he said," or "Probably I deserve what he did to me," or "I do not feel really hurt by what he did to me." Rather, we realistically recognize that we have suffered wrong, but we do not allow such wrongs to weaken our mutual commitment. Why? First, because we recognize that we are sinful beings who sometimes hurt each other terribly. We violate the deepest trust of our mates. We trample upon their unconditional love. Second, because we realize that since God can forgive our mates, so can we.

Forgiveness in a marriage covenant must be as unconditional as is Christ's forgiveness to us. In Ephesians 4:32, Paul writes: "And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you." God forgave us in Christ, not after we promised to reform and obey, but "while we were yet sinners" (Rom 5:8). In the same way, we must forgive our mates not only if they promise never to wrong us again, but simply because God in Christ has forgiven us.

This means that when we forgive, we must be willing to forget the wrong we have suffered. The Scripture reassures us that God's forgiveness involves forgetting our sinful actions: "I, I am He who blots out your transgressions for my own sake, I will not remember your sins" (Is 43:25). "As far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us" (Ps 103:17; cf. Jer 31:34; 2 Cor 5:17-19).

Forgiveness in a marriage covenant involves forgetting the wrongs a mate has committed and choosing not to recount them later. If we continue to remember and to bring up past grievances every time a conflict breaks out, then we have not truly forgiven our mate because genuine forgiveness means blotting out past wrongs from memory (Acts 3:19). Such a forgiveness is possible when we personally have experienced the blessing of God's forgiveness in our lives. When the love of Christ has flooded our hearts, we will have the motivating power to forgive.

Genuine forgiveness makes us free to love, to trust, and to grow with our mates. It enables us to break the cycle of retaliatory attacks. If we have been wounded by the words or actions of our mates, we refuse to retaliate by returning words or actions in kindness. Such an attitude can calm tensions and create a pleasant atmosphere conducive to a rational discussion of the problem.

A couple willing to forgive each other will also help each other to repent of wrong doings. In the Christian life, we are led to repentance by the convicting power of the Holy Spirit which reveals to us our sinfulness and God's forgiving grace. When we experience God's forgiving grace in our lives, we feel sorry for our past sins, and we sincerely want to walk in newness of life. The same is true in the marital relationship. If my wife forgives me, I will feel sorry for my wrong doings, and I will seek not to betray her love and trust again. Forgiveness gives us a chance to begin again and develop a stronger relationship because it is based on the power of forgiving love which can conquer conflicts and reconcile us to God and to one another.

Conclusion

Some conflicts are inevitable in every marriage because no two persons have exactly the same personality, attitude, and values. A successful Christian marriage is not necessarily one in which there are no conflicts, but rather one in which partners have learned to handle their conflicts constructively, turning them into opportunities for

improving communication and building a stronger marriage covenant. We have found that seven basic rules can help in turning conflicts into constructive opportunities.

First, we must be totally committed to preserving our marriage covenant. It is only within the context of a loving and steadfast commitment that marital conflicts can be successfully resolved.

Second, we must be honest and fair in handling marital conflicts, avoid hitting below the belt or lying to win the argument. Our concern should be to find the best solution to the problem, irrespective of who wins or loses.

Third, we must learn to keep our anger under control, avoiding outbursts of anger, insulting language, and cutting remarks. If the conflict gets out of control, the more spiritually mature partner will seek to still the storm by refusing to retaliate for the hurt received.

Fourth, we must choose an appropriate time to discuss a problem, avoiding raising issues just before anything that would not provide adequate time to deal with them satisfactorily.

Fifth, we must learn to stick to the issue at hand, and not use the occasion to bring up past grievances. This includes avoiding sweeping generalizations and accusations.

Sixth, we must learn to listen carefully to the words of our mates and to speak tactfully. Such an approach will make it possible to uncover hidden feelings which may be the cause of the conflict.

Seventh, we must be willing to forgive and to forget the wrongs of our mates, not because we are morally upright, but because we have experienced God's forgiving grace in our lives. By learning to forgive and to forget, we become free to love, to trust, and to grow into a stronger covenant relationship.

On this topic of resolving marital conflict Josh McDowell offers us the following comments:

To Resolve or Dissolve

There is a phrase I want you to remember. It is simply this: It is more rewarding to resolve a conflict than to dissolve a relationship. Of course, it is much easier just to walk away than to put forth the effort to resolve a conflict. But the reward of staying is that every time you resolve a conflict you come out a better person—better able to deal with the inevitable conflicts the future will bring...

The elevation of self above others has created an "I'm number 1" philosophy which does not teach us to build lasting relationships and to resolve conflict. If winning is everything for you, you may reach a few personal goals, but you will sacrifice relationships along the way. Relationships are built by yielding, not winning. We must therefore rise above our culture if we want to experience intimate, fulfilled relationships. I believe that, through Christ, you and I can do that.

Have you ever felt good after resolving a conflict? If so, you will agree that there are positive benefits from conflict. I know that I have become a sharper, more useful instrument in the hands of the Holy Spirit because of how God has used conflicts with people in my life. Proverbs 27:17 instructs that as "iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another." I have become more sensitive to the hurts and feelings of other people as a result of conflict. Romans 5:3, 4 explains that tribulation brings about perseverance and proven character. God uses conflict in my life to develop these inner qualities...(p.102-104)

You may have recognized yourself in one or even several of these negative ways of dealing with conflict. If so, you will be glad to know that there are positive and constructive ways of dealing with it. Each starts with your commitment to the lordship of Jesus Christ. Spiritual maturity is evidenced not by a lack of conflict, but by dealing with it biblically and without losing self-control. Your desire to resolve conflict will also depend upon your commitment to the relationship. The closer you are to the other person, the more willing you will be to work through a conflict(The Secret of Loving, p.107)

Criticising others is something that feels so easy to do, yet it is something which can do a lot of emotional damage just as easily. It takes our mind off our own faults and by knocking someone down in our own eyes it elevates us and makes us feel superior. Knowing this fatal inclination in our human nature Jesus warned us in several scriptures about how we criticise others.

Offering criticism is a delicate art because of this and one which the world gives little or no training in, yet it is absolutely critical in our relationships and handling conflict. I offer the following points on it that I have picked up through my reading and ones that I have learnt through painful trial and error that would be beneficial to review next time you feel you might need to confront someone over an issue.

- 1) IS IT NEEDED?** Do you have to confront someone over what they've done or how they are handling something? Some people love fault-finding and pointing out other's real or perceived errors. There comes a time when a confrontation or some criticism is necessary but keep it to a minimum. Sometimes it's very hard to gauge.

After many painful mistakes in this area my rule of thumb is, if in doubt don't, or put another way, err on the side of too little criticism rather than too much. Before you do, find out what you can to determine if it is the right time to confront them. Are they going through enough problems as it is without being loaded with more? Is their self-esteem low that they need encouragement rather than criticism? Are they aware of the problem and are they trying their best to work on it already? These are some of the questions we need to answer before we confront someone over an issue.

- 2) STICK TO THE FACTS.** Before we confront someone or criticise them we need to make absolutely sure we've got all the facts. We must be aware that sometimes even one extra fact can completely change the whole perception of a problem. Are our facts accurate? Are we interpreting the facts correctly? We need to be careful we criticise someone fairly as much as possible and not on false assumptions or facts.

3) CRITICISE THE PROBLEM AND NEVER ATTACK SOMEONE PERSONALLY.

It's so easy to call people names and attack someone personally rather than the issue at hand. **One of God's great principles is love the sinner but hate the sin.** We need to remember that every time you feel the desire to criticise someone, and focus on the issue at hand rather than attacking the person.

4) ALLOW THEM TO RESPOND. People who walk out during an argument are dirty fighters. If you are angry with your friend, you have a responsibility to stay and hear the other side. Then there's an opportunity for resolution or compromise.

5) PRAY. A very important tool in resolving conflict is prayer. Pray for the wisdom to tactfully offer the criticism in the most caring way possible. Pray for your personal attitudes, and the other person to have the right attitudes. Pray against a repeat episode. Trust God to work in and strengthen the relationship and thank God when the friendship has been healed.

6) BE HUMBLE. A person will be much more willing to listen to criticism if they are not made to feel inferior. If you criticise calmly and show you're no better than them by telling them how you've done badly in similar ways and you're been working on it also they'll be more willing to listen. Avoid talking down to them at all costs.

7) BALANCE CRITICISM WITH PRAISE. I call this approach the sandwich effect. A classic example of this are the letters to the seven churches in Revelation, chapters 2 and 3. Jesus started off by praising them and telling them some of their good points. Then he offered the constructive criticism that they needed to be in His kingdom before He finished off with giving them a fantastic incentive to apply the criticism - "to he who overcomes I will grant to sit with me on my throne". It's like a sandwich in that you start off with something positive then offer the criticism then cap it off with something positive again.

Criticism is a delicate art and we should swift to hear and slow to criticise. If we offer criticism not only must we speak the truth in doing so but we must speak the truth in love (Eph.4:15).

How Not to Solve Family Arguments

Garner Ted Armstrong in his booklet "How to Have a Happy Marriage" talks about how not to and how to solve family arguments. He writes:

Here are several formulas which are guaranteed not to work in your marriage, formulas for failure:

- 1. Be sure to place the blame on your spouse for every problem.** Make sure, in your most acidic, hateful tone, he or she understands that you hold your spouse responsible for the current situation. Pontificate. Show him or her you are perfectly unassailable, that you are totally innocent. He or she is wholly in the wrong.

2. **Clam up.** Give your spouse the "silent treatment." After a period of time (perhaps months, or years, or a lifetime, depending on how stubborn your mate really is), the other will relent, and admit it is really his or her fault.
3. **Call your spouse names.** Get ugly. Use four letter words; sound like a mule skinner cursing out a mule. This will contribute to the tender, loving environment you really want. Also, it will surprise you what an elaborate vocabulary your spouse really has. Be sure to say these things in front of the kids, so they can grow up using them.
4. **Always use the word "always," or "never."** Like, "You always embarrass me..." or, "You never do anything for me." This will guarantee instant agreement. Your spouse will immediately agree he or she invariably acts the way you insist.
5. **Play a role from the latest movie, or novel you've read.** Be petulant, or withdrawn, or play hurt. Act out a role - that way your spouse will be sure to fulfil your fantasies. You imagine he or she will wonder, "I wonder what I've done wrong now?" and be moved to find out, and repent. They will ask, "What have I done to hurt you, dear?" Then, they will dissolve in heart-broken repentance, and do better.
6. **Withhold sex.** Resist every intimacy. Turn a cold shoulder. Kick your spouse away from you in bed, even he or she should accidentally touch you. Tell them to "get over" and say, "Don't touch my body with your body!" That way, you will be sure your spouse will eventually get so wound up, and so deprived, he or she will repent in a flood of tears and confess what a jerk, or a harridan, he or she has become.
7. **Resort to physical abuse.** That way, the neighbors will call the police, or the wife can sue, and the children will run next door screaming, "Daddy is killing Mommy!" Also, the wife can display her black eyes and cut lips for the newspaper photographers, and the negatives will be impounded by the court when your trial for assault comes up.
8. **Develop bad habits.** Take up smoking, drinking, and/or drugs, or all three. See how far you can degenerate. That will "show" the spouse how much you really love her or him; he or she will get the obvious message that you are really only doing these things out of frustration; to get his or her attention. It will show your spouse that what you really want is love, kindness, consideration, respect, and honor.
9. **Start staying out late.** Never tell your spouse where you are going, where you were, or who you were with. Keep him or her guessing. This will make your spouse jealous, and he or she will realize it's time to shape up.
10. **See a lawyer about a divorce.** If you are doing all the above, it is a sure thing you're going to need one.

Of course, any such tactics are a hateful violation of God's laws, and guaranteed to make a bad situation even worse. Yet, such tactics are resorted to by millions of people on a daily basis.

When you want him or her to change, do you resort to abusive language, indictments, accusations? Do you use words for clubs, hitting the other over the head with plenty of verbal blows?

Why not sit down, and calmly ask yourself, "What result do I seek?" If the result is one of peacemaking, one of rekindling love, consideration, respect and honor, then why not show love, respect, and honor? Does the average person react lovingly to verbal abuse?

How to Solve Family Arguments

If you really want to solve family problems, then invite God into your family life. Turn to God's Word in contrition and humility, and study it. Find out what repentance is; what sin is, and follow God's miraculous formula for overcoming hateful, despicable carnality. Change from vanity, jealousy, lust and greed; from egocentric, hateful contempt to the qualities of God's Holy Spirit.

God says, "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; adultery, fornication, uncleanness [both physical and moral], lasciviousness [lawlessness], idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I told you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the Kingdom of God.

"But the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law..." (Galatians 5:19-23), What a contrast! Any, couple conducting their marriage with "love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, etc." is pursuing a formula which guarantees success!

Study the beautiful "love" chapter of 1 Corinthians 13. Here, the Greek word agape, which is rendered "charity," is better understood by our English word "love." Paul wrote, "Love suffers long, and is kind; love does not envy; love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up. Does not behave itself unseemly, seeks not its own way, is not easily provoked, does not immediately leap to conclusions, thinking evil; Does not rejoice in sin and lawlessness, but rejoices; in the truth; Endures and desires to cover all things, believes the best, hopes for the best..." (1 Corinthians 13;4-7, paraphrased).

A person in whom dwells the Holy Spirit of God, which is the mind of Jesus Christ, will not use the terribly sinful, abusive and abrasive tactics listed in the previous section. Instead, he or she will be living by God's instruction; involving marriage, exemplifying the attributes of God's Holy Spirit as shown in the scriptures we have, just read.

Want to solve a family argument? Then approach your spouse with love and humility. Recognize and humbly acknowledge your own faults and shortcomings. Choose the right time, the right place, and use the right manner in presenting the problem you hope to solve.

First, pray about it. Pray on your knees, by yourself, not only for the wisdom and the guidance you will need in presenting the problem to your mate, but also asking God, as did David, to "search me and try me, and see if there be any evil thing in me," acknowledging and confessing your own faults and sins!

Then, if your spouse is willing, get on your knees together, and take the entire problem to Almighty God in prayer! The prayer should begin with the

acknowledgment of one's own shortcomings; a prayer for forgiveness for various oversights, bad attitudes, harsh words, or whatever has contributed to the problem that is currently troubling your marriage. After acknowledging one's own faults and sins, the person leading in prayer should ask for God's direct intervention in the marriage, citing several of the scriptures you have read in this booklet, asking God to help each partner to use, as a daily guide; to literally live by God's instructions!

What wife would not be moved to tears if her husband, contritely and humbly, perhaps with tears in his own eyes, is asking God to forgive him for having failed to treat his wife with the same tender love, care and honor that Jesus Christ has bestowed upon His church? What husband could remain unmoved if his wife is asking God's forgiveness for having failed to treat her husband as if he were the Lord Jesus Christ himself?

A truly converted person should be fully equipped to successfully solve family difficulties, problems, arguments as they arise. But only by inviting God into your family life!(p.34-38)

TEN COMMANDMENTS FOR WIVES

Cecil Osborne has many great insights in his wonderful book "The Art of Understanding Your Mate". He has a chapter each entitled "Ten Commandments for Husbands" and "Ten Commandments for Wives". The following are his ten commandments for wives:

There is a story about a young unmarried psychologist who wrote a book with the title Ten Commandments for Parents. A few years later he married, and in due course a baby was born. When the child was about five, the father rewrote his book and had it published under the title Ten Suggestions for Parents. After the fourth child was born some years later, he rewrote his book and it was published with the title Ten Possible Hints for Parents.

After forty years of marriage and after having counseled with several thousand married people, I still feel understandably presumptuous in setting down ten absolutes, or commandments, for husbands and wives.

Perhaps these could be considered "Guide Lines," general principles which, if followed with some degree of consistency, will tend to make a better marriage.

Here are the Ten Commandments for Wives in brief form:

- I. Learn the Real Meaning of Love.**
- II. Give Up Your Dreams of a "Perfect Marriage" and Work Toward a "Good Marriage."**
- III. Discover Your Husband's Personal, Unique Needs and Try to Meet Them.**
- IV. Abandon All Dependency Upon Your Parents and All Criticism of His Relatives.**
- V. Give Praise and Appreciation Instead of Seeking It.**
- VI. Surrender Possessiveness and Jealousy.**
- VII. Greet Your Husband With Affection Instead of Complaints or Demands.**
- VIII. Abandon All Hope of Changing Your Husband Through Criticism or Attack.**

IX. Outgrow the Princess Syndrome.

X. Pray for Patience.

When you married, you probably brought to marriage certain preconceived ideas of how life was going to be—perhaps a kind of perpetual romance, a continuation of the honeymoon. Then came grim reality. It wasn't the way you had dreamed it. He changed, didn't he? And without realizing it, you weren't always the same loving, patient, starry-eyed, adoring young woman he married. You both changed. Now let's see how we can go about restoring some of the star dust. Taking the Ten Commandments one by one, let's see what they imply:

1. Learn the Real Meaning of Love. You thought you were in love, and no doubt you were. Since then you may have wondered if you were really in love. Were there times when you wondered if you should have married someone else? Maybe it was all a terrible mistake.

Well, love isn't what you thought it was when you were in your teens. It is much, much more, and far more complex. If you want to be loved, you must make yourself lovable—not for a day or a week, but on a permanent basis. This may involve a radical change of attitude on your part. You want your husband to change, of course; undoubtedly there are many areas in which he needs to change. But you will never change him without a mature love. "Love never fails," said the Apostle Paul in his first letter to the Corinthians. That is, if you are going to make a success of your marriage, you will do it with a mature love, not with demands, criticism, or tears.

Love is not adolescent infatuation or even sexual attraction, important as this is. Love is basically love of life, love of God, proper love of oneself, love of others, and the expressing of this love in manifold ways. Almost no one ever receives enough love. If you would be loved, learn to give mature love in a form your husband can accept. Some men who grew up in homes where affection was not freely expressed are undemonstrative. A young wife whose parents were demonstrative and affectionate complained that her husband resisted her attempts to express affection.

"He expresses love by buying me things and taking me places, but he won't tell me he loves me," she complained. "He will do things for me, but why can't he tell me he loves me?" she asked. I explained that his environment had "wired him up" that way and that she would have to accept, for the time being, the fact that he was not demonstrative.

"Give him two or five or ten years," I said, "and if you are patient, he can learn as an adult what he never learned as a child. Meanwhile try to accept his manner of expressing love."

Love is not just a sentimental feeling, nor is it simply affection. It is also an act of the will—a determination to give love in a form the other can accept. Love can be expressed through patience, tolerance for the failings of your husband, meeting his needs, and by avoiding criticism. Love does not demand, it gives. Your own need for love can make you unlovable if it is expressed in a demanding or martyred manner.

II. Give Up Your Dreams of a "Perfect Marriage" and Work Toward a "Good Marriage." There are no perfect marriages for the simple reason that there are no perfect people. Teen-age expectations of an idealized marriage are

unrealistic. There are some more or less ideal marriages, but they are generally the ones which have been worked out through the years.

When you have shaken the rice out of your hair, you have just started on a journey which may involve "debt, drudgery, and diapers," as one wife expressed it. Now begins the long hard pull toward the goal of a workable marriage. You begin to discover that your young knight has faults you had never discovered during the courtship. (He's discovering some things about you which he never expected, too.) He is not quite the person you had dreamed of, but then, neither are you the person he thought he was marrying. Irritations set in, differences appear that you had not counted on. Marriage is the most difficult and complex of all human relationships, and it requires patience, skill, tact, emotional and spiritual growth. You can "grow a good marriage" if you are willing to work at it.

III. Discover Your Husbands Personal, Unique Needs and Try to Meet Them. He is not precisely like any other person on earth. He, like you, is unique. He has needs and preferences, failures and weaknesses, virtues and strengths, in a combination unlike anyone else.

Give up any preconceived notions you had as to how to please a man. You have, as a woman, a strong desire to please him. But the way you want to please him may not satisfy his needs at all.

You may have heard, for instance, that "the way to a man's heart is through his stomach." This may or may not be true of the particular male you married. It is more likely that his basic need is for gentleness and affection. He may be a meticulous person who likes everything in its place and feels irritated by a cluttered house; or he may be relatively indifferent to neat housekeeping and be passionately fond of sports, in which he wants you to take part. He may be spontaneous and unpredictable and want you to react to life in the same way; or he may have more of a slide rule mentality, preferring stability and an orderly, planned life.

Abandon any preconceived ideas as to what men are like and discover what your man is like. You will be unable, at first, to meet all of his needs. No one person can meet all of the needs of another individual. Don't feel that you have failed in your marriage if you are unable to gratify all of his needs and preferences, or that he is a failure as a husband because he cannot meet all of your needs.

However, as you discover the unique, special requirements of your husband, you can work toward the goal of seeking to meet them. If he makes totally unrealistic, or neurotic, demands upon you, you have a perfect right to maintain your own integrity by expressing your feelings. You need not become a doormat or a household slave. You can seek to meet his needs out of a strong love, rather than out of weakness or a need to "buy" his love.

IV. Abandon All Dependency Upon Your Parents and All Criticism of His Relatives. You spent eighteen or twenty years or more in close relationship with your parents. During the first few years of your life you were totally dependent upon them for everything. Growth and maturity demanded a gradual lessening of this dependency, until finally the cord was cut and you were on your own. Many parents consciously want to give their daughters freedom, but at an unconscious level fear to "lose" them. This fear can manifest itself in many ways—through the giving of unsolicited advice (which may be quite valid and wise), or it may take the form of trying to run your life. They want to prevent you from making mistakes. I have known

women of thirty or forty years of age, who, upon visiting their parents, were made to feel like little girls again...

A basic rule in marriage is to never, never criticize the relatives of your marriage partner! Your husband may offer criticism of his parents or brothers and sisters, but you should never join in. Even though he may feel hostility toward some relative, he will generally not appreciate your criticism. It's all right for him to express resentment of his parents, but your attitude should be one of tolerance. Nor does he have a right to criticize your relatives. You may do so if you wish, but he should not.

V. Give Praise and Appreciation Instead of Seeking It. Women generally need somewhat more reassurance, and desire it more often than men, but husbands need it, too. You may have done your best to prepare a delicious meal and may expect some appreciative comment. But some men are unaware of a wife's need for frequent appreciation and praise...

You, as a wife, cannot command your husband's approval. You cannot make him more thoughtful by complaining. Such tactics may cause him to retreat or become hostile. Your task is to offer him the same sort of recognition and praise which you expect of him. If he is too egocentric or blandly unaware of his surroundings to discover your need for frequent expressions of appreciation, you can let him know gently, lovingly, that you need to hear him tell you these things. If you tell him in a complaining, martyr-like manner, however, you will only succeed in making him hostile. Don't sound like his mother reproving him for some childhood failure. No man likes being made to feel like a small boy. Love and tact can win when petulant demands fail.

Your husband will learn more by "osmosis"—through unconscious absorption of your attitudes—than if you make irritable demands upon him. It takes a wise and patient wife to make a good husband. They seldom come ready-made.

VI. Surrender Possessiveness and Jealousy. These two traits are close relatives. Everyone has the capacity for jealousy, and some jealousy is normal. It is only when it becomes possessive and all-pervasive that it is destructive.

Extreme possessiveness stems from insecurity. A young man whose wedding was only a week away consulted me about his overly-possessive fiancée. She was eighteen, he twenty-two. She had vetoed his selection of a best man, whom she disliked. In fact he said, she had stated that she would not allow his friend in the house. She had made certain other demands which indicated considerable insecurity. I said, "If you let her get away with this, you will have to give in a thousand times in the next few years, until you either have no freedom left, or you abandon the marriage. Ask her to come in with you so we talk it out." She refused at first, saying that as adults they ought to be able to work out their own personal problems. I advised him to tell her that unless she would agree to see some marriage counselor now, and after the marriage if necessary, he had no intention of going through with the marriage. He said, "Thanks for that! I wanted to do it, but felt guilty. The invitations are all out. But I feel I have regained my manhood in deciding to tell her that we must see a counselor when it seems necessary."

Of course she came in, though somewhat sullen and resentful. During the conference she tugged at his sleeve reprovingly when he didn't sit up straight in his chair. She frowned at him when he made a mild grammatical error. After listening to them for an hour, I said, "Your marriage has less than a fifty-fifty chance of surviving. But if you

will both agree, willingly, to see a marriage counselor, or join a group where your problems can be resolved, I'd give it a ten to one chance of working out."

She would not agree. I said, "I sense that you must have had an impaired or broken relationship with your father. She said, "My real father died when I was two, and of course I don't remember him. Then for a few years I had a stepfather. My mother divorced him. I don't feel that I ever had a father."

She had two counts against her, through no fault of her own. Having had no father to whom she could relate, and no brothers, she really didn't know the first thing about men or marriage. In addition, the loss of her father and stepfather had implanted in her unconscious mind the feeling: "Men abandon you. They go away. I must cling to this one or I may lose him as I lost the others." Her all-pervasive insecurity had an understandable origin.

As Freud pointed out many years ago, we act out in adult life the unresolved conflicts of childhood. If we are to live creative, happy lives, we must seek out the origin of our insecurities and try to resolve them rather than justify them.

Overpossessiveness will drive a man away or cause him to retreat into the cold grey castle of his own loneliness or into the arms of another woman. If you are unduly possessive, you are basically very insecure. You probably cannot resolve this deep-seated condition all alone. You will need the help of a professional counselor, and it will take time.

VII. Greet Your Husband With Affection Instead of Complaints or Demands. You would appreciate some warmth and affection from your husband when he comes home. Your needs are valid. But if they are not being met, you can initiate response yourself. He too has needs. Perhaps he wonders why you don't greet him at the door with a warm hug and a kiss. Instead, you may greet him with the news that Jimmy has been bad, the washer is out of order, and the garbage needs to be taken out. "Oh, yes, and there's a notice from the bank that we're overdrawn." That does it!

Here we have some incompatible needs. Your needs are valid. You want someone to lean on, to share with—to take some of the responsibility off of your shoulders. You've had a bad day...If he grunts and shuts you out, it is not because he doesn't care, but because he, too, wanted something and didn't get it.

Delay the bad news until after dinner! Don't hit him with it the minute he walks into the house. Greet him with some affection whether you feel like it or not. It pays big dividends. "Give and it shall be given unto you...."

Perhaps he should be more understanding, more appreciative, more communicative. But he isn't. This is the man you married "for better or worse." It's worse than you thought? He could be thinking the same thing. He may be sitting in front of the TV set or reading, half wondering, "Why did I give up my freedom for this? Before I was married at least I had some peace and quiet. I wasn't met at the door with bad news and demands."

No one is right or wrong at this point. It is simply that one of the basic incompatibilities of marriage has shown its face. Both of you are asking, and no one is giving. Someone must break the impasse. Let it be the most mature, the most perceptive, the most loving. If you are this one, then begin to act that way. Give your husband appreciation and affection. Don't try to achieve results in three months. He

may even be suspicious of your sudden change. "What's she up to now?" Be willing to invest a year or five years. Kill him with kindness and see what happens. Your marriage will be better.

VIII. Abandon All Hope of Changing Your Husband Through Criticism or Attack... We can change no other person by direct action. We can change only ourselves; and when we change, others tend to change in reaction to us. If you want a better marriage, you must abandon, once and for all, any hope of changing your husband by direct action. The now look here!" stance never works. It breeds hostility and often a counterattack. This applies not only to husbands, but to all other persons including children. Love changes people. Hostility breeds hostility, but love begets love.

You do have a right to express your feelings, within limits. Consider the probable reaction to these two different approaches:

"Henry, I've about had it! You never talk to me; you forgot our wedding anniversary, and you don't pay any attention to the kids. It's been months since you even thought of taking me out to dinner."

Or, "Dear, I have a problem. Maybe you can help me with it. I've been feeling depressed and out of sorts lately. At first I thought maybe I needed a physical checkup, but I think perhaps it's something else. Suddenly I began to realize I'm depressed. You look depressed, too, sometimes. I'm cooped up with the kids, and feel frustrated at times, but you have it hard, too. I know I've been demanding and critical. Maybe you feel I don't love you, but I do. If I've become a nag. I want you to tell me. I don't want to nag. You know, I just realized that I was a lot nicer to you before we were married than I am now. I didn't nag then....

"Look, honey, how would it be if we sort of started all over? I'll try to be less critical. I have no right to change you, and I am going to quit trying. How would it be if we get a baby sitter some time this week or next and have dinner out, and perhaps go somewhere afterwards. Maybe we need a little time to ourselves. Huh?"

Friend, husband may or may not respond immediately. Or again he may. This approach should not be used as a manipulative device to get your own way, but only if you genuinely want to express love and affection, and if you want to give up making demands. He may respond instantly or a year later, depending upon whether he is a delayed reactor or a spontaneous type of personality. It's worth trying: give up making demands; abandon the martyr stance and stop trying to change him. Express love and patience.

IX. Outgrow the Princess Syndrome. Not every woman suffers from this, of course, but many do just as many men grow up with the Prince Syndrome. In essence, the Princess Syndrome is the feeling that you are "special." No one is special; unique, yes; special, no. A little girl may have heard a hundred or a thousand times that she was pretty or cute. She absorbs this, when quite young, as her due. Her adoring subjects (parents, relatives, friends) pay homage to this lovely little creature with the beautiful smile and cute ways. If she is an only child of adoring parents, or the youngest child, she can become even more susceptible. If she is especially talented in some way, she may grow up to believe that she is, indeed, very special. Often such a girl learns instinctively how to manipulate others, beginning usually with Daddy...

A "princess" doesn't give. She asks, demands, becomes petulant when she cannot have her way. She buys luxuries with money that should be saved for necessities. She delivers ultimatums, or if she is subtle, manipulates to achieve her ends. If you see any of these traits in yourself, however small, begin now to abandon them as a holdover from childhood.

X. Pray for Patience. "I thought we could work out all those little things after we were married," said a wife who before marriage knew that her husband was a fairly heavy drinker. "He wasn't an alcoholic," she said, "and I was sure that if he loved me enough, he'd keep his drinking within bounds." Marriage, however, increased some of his inner tensions and he began to drink to excess.

Another wife, whose husband's passion for golf did not bother her before marriage, complained that he left her alone on weekends while he golfed with his male friends.

The urge to be married, establish a home, and have children is so strong in most women that they are often blind to faults which are only dimly perceived before marriage. There is a partly unconscious belief in the minds of most women that "love will surmount all." In most instances, the right kind of love can solve any marital problems. The right kind of love involves patience. "Love is patient and kind," we read in the New Testament (I Cor. 13:4). A mature love has this quality of patience. An immature love wants results right now. "Lord, give me patience, and give it to me right now," is the unconscious prayer of such persons.

"Love bears all things...hopes..." (I Cor. 13:7). Give up the tendency to complain, criticise, and control. You cannot control another human being even if you are entirely right in what you desire. The more you criticise and condemn, the more likely you are to drive your husband farther from you. If he drinks or golfs or watches television to excess; if he seems to ignore you, forgets anniversaries, and is in other ways thoughtless or inconsiderate, your petulant demands or hurt expression will seldom bring the desired results. It takes a great deal of patience to put up with unacceptable conduct, but good marriages are built on a foundation of patience.

This does not preclude the right to express your opinion. You need not give up your identity or become a doormat...Patience with another does not imply that we must lose our freedom of choice (p.157-170).

TEN COMMANDMENTS FOR HUSBANDS

Cecil Osborne in his wonderful book "The Art of Understanding Your Mate" offers these ten commandments for husbands:

Here are the Ten Commandments for Husbands:

- I. Treat Your Wife With Strength and Gentleness.**
- II. Give Ample Praise and Reassurance.**
- III. Define the Areas of Responsibility.**
- IV. Avoid Criticism.**
- V. Remember the Importance of "Little Things."**
- VI. Recognize Her Need for Togetherness.**
- VII. Give Her a Sense of Security.**

VIII. Recognize the Validity of Her Moods.

IX. Cooperate With Her in Every Effort to Improve Your Marriage.

X. Discover Her Particular, Individual Needs and Try to Meet Them.

I. Treat Your Wife With Strength and Gentleness. No matter how self-reliant a woman may be, regardless of her intelligence, capability, and drive, even if she seems dominant, there is something within her which wants to "lean" on a man. Reduced to its basic elements, a woman wants to be "taken, and taken care of." She wants to feel that she has been chosen (even if she has actually done the initial choosing). She would like to be swept off her feet, and then taken care of with gentleness and strength.

These two qualities are basic. Your wife may discover that you are not always as strong as she had hoped, nor as perfect, and sometimes perhaps not as gentle. If she married you taking your passivity for gentleness, and your quietness for strength, she will be disappointed.

In a group session a wife was complaining about her husband's passivity. She said, "He is very gentle and quiet—too quiet. He never has any ideas of his own. I make most of the decisions. I can have my way about almost anything. I don't want my way all the time. I want him to take the lead, to initiate and plan. I even plan our vacations. He lets me do about anything I want. I just wish he'd put his foot down once in a while and tell me I couldn't do something."

Suppose you knew you were right," I said, "and he stubbornly put his foot down and insisted on having it done his way. Would you go for that?"

"I'd enjoy that," she replied. "I'm sick and tired of making all the decisions."

"But if he did start making decisions, you'd put up an argument, wouldn't you?"

Sure, almost any woman would. But I don't really want to win. I want him to win part of the time. I want him to be stronger than I am."

"But you picked out a passive male," I said. "Something in you sensed his passivity, you wanted it, and now you are complaining."

She was thoughtful. "Well, I guess the human part of me wanted someone I could manage and control but the feminine part of me wants a man who is strong enough to make me behave—even when I put up a fuss."

This confusing ambivalence on the part of a woman can be irritating or infuriating to a man who sees it as illogical. You, as a husband, might feel like saying to such a wife, "Look! If you want me to be in charge, stop putting up a battle over every issue. After knocking myself out at work, I don't want to have to come home and spend what little psychic energy I have left fighting a mock battle over some trivial issue."

Maintain your identity in some other way, but don't give me an argument over each issue that arises." Even such a speech as that could, in a sense, indicate to your wife that you are taking charge.

Being in charge does not mean being "the boss" or becoming domineering. Only a very insecure man feels a need to force his will on others. Strength does not imply

throwing your weight around, issuing orders, and demanding obedience of everyone within earshot.

This combination of strength and tenderness is not easily achieved if one does not possess it innately, but you can work at it. You may make mistakes, but with patience and determination you can satisfy your wife's inner need for emotional security with a quiet strength that is gentle and tender.

II. Give Ample Praise and Reassurance. For thousands of years women were in a subordinate position. Only in this century have they achieved equality in voting and property rights, and partial equality on the job. Their rights are newly won, and the ancient insecurities are still resident in the female emotional structure.

In addition, the role of mother renders the woman much more vulnerable and insecure. Instinctively she feels a need for someone to protect her and her children and to provide for the family. This generates a kind of all-pervasive insecurity which exists whether there are children or not, or after the children have left the nest. Some women are extremely reluctant to reveal to a man the extent of their insecurity and their desperate need for a husband to "lean" on. But it is there.

Because of this and other factors, women need considerable reassurance. It can be given in the form of praise, recognition, commendation, or simply by saying, "I love you!"—often. When a woman asks, "Do you love men" she isn't asking for information. She is asking for reassurance...

III. Define the Areas of Responsibility. In a relationship between any two persons, there must be a tacit understanding of the areas of responsibility. If two men are in partnership, they must work out the spheres of activity and have them clearly defined. The same thing holds with equal force in a marriage relationship.

Some areas seem clearly enough defined. Your wife takes care of the house, cooks, and has the primary responsibility for the children, particularly when they are very young. You earn the living. But there are many other less clearly defined areas.

Who takes out the garbage? Who is responsible for the lawn, choosing the new car, deciding where to spend the vacation? Who has the veto power on making investments or where to live? Who is primarily responsible for seeing the teacher when one of the children is having difficulty at school? Who decides when to buy a new washing machine or new furniture? Who casts the deciding vote concerning what to do on weekends—whether time will be spent with the children, with friends, or on some hobby?

A simplistic answer is: "Let the final decision rest with the one who is best qualified." Unfortunately this is a gross oversimplification. You, as husband, could easily abdicate responsibility by saying, "Look, dear, you're a lot better at that than I am. Why don't you just take care of it and not bother me with details?"

There is, to the male, a "peculiarity" of the feminine nature which—in most cases—wants the husband to participate. A wife often feels more "secure" if she can talk things over with her husband. She may choose a time to do this when you want to read, golf, or watch television. You can become grossly irritated over what may seem to you to be minor issues. But life consists not only of major decisions.

Marriage is mostly "little things," which, to a male, can be an excruciating bore. But this is a part of marriage and of living.

A couple must find out for themselves where the various "spheres of influence" lie: who pays the bills, who casts the deciding vote on buying what house, renting which apartment, where to vacation. A selfish husband or wife may insist on rendering a final verdict on all decisions, major and minor; but marriage involves resolving the incompatible needs of three different people...

IV. Avoid Criticism. A woman tends to lose her identity somewhat more readily than a man, other things being equal. A man who constantly criticises and condemns his wife can produce numerous negative results in his wife.

She may:

- A. Become deeply depressed through repressing her hostility.
- B. Develop one or more physical symptoms, since the mind tends to hand its pain over to the body.
- C. Become hostile, emotionally unresponsive, or sexually frigid.
- D. Lose her identity through being constantly beaten down.
- E. Unload her resentment onto the children and cause emotional disturbances in them.
- F. Decide to give up the marriage.

A regular barrage of criticism, even when warranted, is always destructive. In fact, almost all criticism is destructive. There is usually a better way to achieve results...

Criticism in any area is inevitable in almost any human relationship, but the less there is, the more satisfactory the marriage will be. This does not rule out expressing one's feelings. There are, however, different ways of saying the same thing:

"Do you realize we have just about the same kind of meal day in and day out? Why can't you get some kind of variety into our meals?"

Or, "You know, dear, you're a good cook, and I enjoy your meals, but when I was a kid we had the same kind of food week in and week out. Mom wasn't a very good cook, and I resolved that when I got married, I'd have some variety in my meals. There's nothing wrong with this food, but I'd prefer a little variety. Just one of my idiosyncrasies."

"Can't you keep these kids quiet? Look, when I come home from work I deserve a little peace and quiet."

Or, "Honey, I've had a hard day, and I know you've had a rough time with the kids, too. They must get on your nerves. I expect you'd like to turn them over to someone else and get a little relief. Unfortunately I just haven't got much steam left when I get home. Tell you what: I'll try to get the kids under control when I come home, while you get dinner; and after dinner I'll go pull myself together for a bit. Then we can sit down and have a little time to ourselves. Okay?"

These are not suggested as "solutions," but simply as different ways of saying the same thing. Just because we are married we do not have the right to be insulting, or tactless and critical. The marriage license is not a license to insult.

V. Remember the Importance of "Little Things." Men are usually less sentimental than women and attach less importance to such things as birthdays, anniversaries, "little" gestures which mean much to women. Love is not just a feeling; it involves positive actions which can mean a great deal to a woman.

I have long been aware of the principle, but like a typical male, I had not let it filter down into the feeling level of my nature. I once asked my wife what she wanted for Christmas. Although, like any woman, she likes surprises, I felt that there was nothing I could get her in the nature of a surprise which would fill any particular need. She surprised me by saying that all she wanted for Christmas was to have a large tree cut down just outside our bedroom window. She had mentioned this numerous times, but I had delayed because of the considerable expense involved. I agreed and long before Christmas I found an opportunity to have the tree removed. Then Christmas arrived, and I felt a need to put something under the tree for her. Her physical needs and wants were, so far as I could see, well supplied. She could think of nothing she particularly wanted.

Christmas Eve came, and I still had no idea what I could get her. Sitting at my desk I began, rather halfheartedly, to work on a crazy—to me—little idea. I cut out a dozen three by five sheets of paper and stapled them together with a cover to form a coupon book.

On one I wrote: Good for One Dinner at a First Class San Francisco Restaurant. The second one read: Good for One Dinner at a Drive-In with Entertainment Afterwards. The third was for One Dinner at a Medium Priced Restaurant. The fourth was good for a dinner at a Chinese Restaurant. Another coupon entitled her to a meal at a steak house. One was for a dinner "at a first-class restaurant, to be earned by meritorious conduct beyond the call of duty," and so on. There were twelve in all, to be used at her discretion.

I felt rather sheepish about the whole deal. It was a crude little coupon book and involved only some dinners and fun which she had every right to expect anyway. To my surprise she was thrilled, because she could pull out a coupon on any free night I might have (rare enough in my case) and decide where we would go for dinner. Eating out in a restaurant is no great treat for me, and I knew this was not true for her, but I was not prepared for the great satisfaction it gave her to know that I was setting aside twelve evenings for dining out.

Men are nearly always surprised to discover how much "little things" (as they deem them to be) mean to a woman—an unexpected gift, a compliment on a new dress, or a sincere, "You look great with the new hairdo, Honey."

A husband who forgets a wedding anniversary has committed an almost unforgivable sin... A young wife married to an unresponsive husband told me that she felt cheated by his lack of consideration of her needs. Part of her resentment was passed on to him in the form of criticism, and part to the children when he wasn't around.

Finally, realizing that direct criticism was useless and destructive, she sat down with him and explained her needs as a woman. She asked him gently to recognize her emotional needs. He just grunted and said he would think about it. But a week or two later he brought her an unexpected gift with a tender expression of love. He had not been unwilling, just uncomprehending. Her former tirades had evoked only hostility or silence. The quiet expression of her needs helped him understand for the first time, and enabled him to respond.

"I don't want to have to remind my husband of our anniversaries," one wife said. "That takes all the fun out of it; and I don't want to have to make all the suggestions about going out, or to dinner. I'd love it if just once he'd initiate something, take the lead, show me that he cares, plan something for us without asking me." This is a legitimate female need, and a husband must recognize it if he is to be an adequate marriage partner.

VI. Recognize Her Need for Togetherness. No two women are identical in their needs, of course, but in general women tend more often than men to require a sense of "togetherness."

This term is much overworked, but the truth it involves cannot be ignored. There is the dependent, possessive, clinging, demanding wife who doesn't want her husband out of her sight. She is in need of counseling, for her neurotic needs spring out of a deep insecurity, but even a typical wife may often want more of her husband's time and attention than he feels like giving her.

Many husbands enjoy family outings. Some men enjoy all manner of activities with their wives, while others have a strong need for male companionship. A husband who wants to preserve a good marriage relationship will try to meet his wife's need for doing things together. If their recreational tastes differ, then a compromise is indicated.

I recall a summer when my wife expressed a desire to spend our vacation at a summer resort. I felt an urge to take a pack trip with some men. She detested camping, and I had no particular desire to sit around a resort with no opportunity for fishing. After a brief discussion, we arranged a compromise. We had two weeks to spend, so I suggested that I would spend one week with her at the resort and one week on a pack trip into the mountains where I could get in some fly fishing. She agreed readily. It was an altogether satisfactory arrangement. She did not in the least mind being left alone for a week because she made friends readily.

A clinging, demanding, possessive wife could make such an arrangement difficult if not impossible. Virtually all husbands and wives have incompatible needs. Togetherness does not imply that we will go through life hand in hand, always enjoying identical things to the same degree. We are still individual humans with divergent needs and tastes. We must respect the needs of others and compromise cheerfully when necessary. Only the immature and childish demand to have their way under all circumstances.

VII. Give Her a Sense of Security. A woman's need for security is much greater than most men imagine. It can be provided by a husband who is strong, gentle, and considerate.

But in specific areas women's needs vary. Many women derive a sense of security (often without being aware of it) from having a husband who does household repairs. This means that he is interested in the nest and thus interested in her. If he is all thumbs and cannot repair a leaky faucet, he may be at a disadvantage at this point. But any man can mow a lawn, which is also related to nest building, or rake leaves, or help move the furniture (if she is a "furniture mover") or at least take an interest in her daily activities. Maybe you feel that you couldn't care less about the details she relates, but you are expressing love by the very act of listening, and thus reinforcing her sense of security.

Some women (as well as men) have what could be called the "pack rat syndrome." They like to save string, or magazines, or have little caches of money for some special event. If your wife derives a sense of security from having a bank account of her own, or her own savings account, go along with it. It may not make sense to you, but this is not as important as her sense of security. It need not be logical. Don't try to run your marriage on a steady diet of logic. Feelings are just as important as logic, often more so. Whatever gives your wife a feeling of security needs to be encouraged so long as it does not disrupt the budget or rob you of your masculine identity.

VIII. Recognize the Validity of Her Moods. All humans vary, of course, in their mood swings. Women, however, tend to have somewhat stronger mood variations than most men. Part of this can be attributed to the monthly cycle. With this a husband must learn to be patient and considerate. A woman can appear to be illogical and utterly irrational at times, at least to the male mind which wants things tidy and logical. You may as well accept her variations in mood as inevitable.

Some happy event can make a woman ecstatically happy, or something that has been said or done may plunge her into depression. A rigid or insecure husband can feel threatened by these up and down mood swings. You may prefer a steady pace with no fluctuations, sacrificing the euphoria if you can avoid the depression. Your wife may be constituted differently. Perhaps you married her because of her capacity for joyousness. But a joyous personality can sometimes experience deep depression. You need not ride up to the heights of her happiness if you are wired up differently, nor plunge into her depression. Perhaps one reason she married you was that unconsciously she desired your emotional stability. Don't be panicked or disturbed by mood swings. Ride them out with patience and kindly indulgence. Don't take it personally or tell her to "Snap out of it."

IX. Cooperate With Her in Every Effort to Improve Your Marriage. Women, as we have seen, are insatiable, and men are obtuse. They can be insatiable in their desire to make a better marriage.

Your wife may want to read a book on marriage or communication or child rearing. Your male ego, if it is a bit weak, may reject this suggested reading, believing there is an implied criticism in her handing you the book to read.

Read it! What do you have to lose? You may even learn something. No one is automatically equipped by a marriage ceremony to function at maximum effectiveness in marriage. Any husband could read a dozen or two books on marriage and profit from the experience.

If she encourages you to visit a marriage counselor with her, or join a group, or go to a series of lectures on marriage or child rearing, by all means go. Marriage and the home involve an all-out activity for a typical woman. Don't be dismayed because she is always pushing for a better relationship. Go along with her graciously and good naturedly. A marriage counselor can cost a great deal less than a divorce and years and years of child support, besides saving a marriage and avoiding the tears and pain of divorce.

X. Discover Her Particular, Individual Needs and Try to Meet Them. No two wives are alike. The one you married is different from any other woman. She has her own particular set of likes and dislikes, moods, and emotional needs. Her needs may seem limitless at first, or unreasonable. Perhaps you cannot

meet all of her needs at once, maybe never. But you can try to discover what she needs, wants, appreciates; you can seek to meet those needs within your capacity. This does not mean catering to childish whims, but it can mean going along with something that may seem illogical or unimportant to you. If it makes her happy, and gives her a sense of satisfaction, try to satisfy the need(p.171-184).

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS OF A MARRIAGE COVENANT

Dr Bacchiocchi wrote an excellent article entitled "The Ten Commandments of a Marriage Covenant. It is somewhat different to Cecil Osborne's two sets of ten commandments for husbands and wives as Dr Bacchiocchi takes each of the ten commandments as listed in Exodus 20 and looks at the parallel principle of each in marriage. I think you will find it quite enlightening. Dr Bacchiocchi writes:

Both the covenant between God and His people and the covenant between marital partners entail privileges and obligations. The privileges of the old covenant included God's choice of the Israelites as His special people, His promise to bless them, to give them the land of Canaan, to send them a Redeemer, to reveal to them His will and to make them His chosen instruments for the conversion of the world.

The obligations consisted of the commitment of the people to obey the principles of conduct God gave to them in the form of commandments (Ex 24:3). God's choice of the Hebrew slaves as His own people was unconditional: "The Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for his own possession, out of all the people that are on the face of the earth. It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the Lord set his love upon you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all peoples; but it was because the Lord loves you..." (Deut 7:6-8)

While God's covenantal commitment to Israel was unconditional, the blessings of the covenant were conditional. If the people obeyed God's commandments, then "the Lord your God will keep with you the covenant...he will love you, bless you, and multiply you..." (Deut 7:12-13). God spelled out the obligations of the covenant in terms of commandments. These included the Ten Commandments as well as other regulations governing their social and religious life.

It is an enlightening exercise to compare the Sinai covenant with the marriage covenant by interpreting the Ten Commandments as ten principles of conduct for married people. Paul Stevens has produced a most perceptive comparison between the two covenants by means of the following table:

Covenant Between Israel and Yahweh

- 1. No other Gods**
- 2. No graven image**
- 3. Not taking the Lord's name in vain**
- 4. Remembering the sabbath day**
- 5. Honoring father and mother**

Covenant Between Wife and Husband

- 1. Exclusive loyalty to my spouse**
- 2. Truthfulness and faithfulness**
- 3. Honoring my spouse in public and private**
- 4. Giving my spouse time and rest**
- 5. Rightly relating to parents and parents-in-law**

6. No murder	6. Freedom from hatred, destructive anger and uncontrolled emotions
7. No adultery	7. Sexual faithfulness; controlled appetites
8. No stealing	8. True community of property with the gift of privacy
9. No false testimony	9. Truthful communication
10. No coveting	10. Contentment: freedom from demands

This table shows that the implications of the Ten Commandments for the marriage covenant are profound. To appreciate these more fully, we shall briefly reflect on how each of the Ten Commandments apply to the marriage covenant. These reflections are an expansion and modification of Paul Steven's exercise called "marital meditations based on the commandments."

The First Commandment of the Sinai covenant summons the Israelites to worship only Yahweh who delivered them from Egyptian bondage: "You shall have no other gods before me" (Ex. 20:3). In this commandment God appeals to us to put Him first in our affections, in harmony with Christ's injunction to seek first God's kingdom and His righteousness (Matt 6:33). We can violate the spirit of the first commandment by putting our trust and confidence in such human resources as knowledge, wealth, position and people.

Applied to the marriage covenant, the first commandment calls us to give exclusive loyalty to our spouse. In practice, this means making our spouse the most important person in our life after God. It means not allowing such matters as professional pursuits, parents, children, friends, hobbies, and possessions to become our first love and thus take the first place in our affections which is to be reserved for our spouse.

It also means not amending the commandment by making our loyalty to our spouse contingent on other factors, as when people say: "I am prepared to give priority to my spouse as long as it does not hinder my professional pursuits." The first commandment, then, calls us to give unconditional and exclusive loyalty to our spouse.

The Second Commandment of the Sinai covenant emphasizes God's spiritual nature (John 4:24) by prohibiting idolatry: "You shall not make for yourself a graven image...you shall not bow down to them or serve them" (Ex 20:4-5). The commandment does not necessarily prohibit the use of illustrative material for religious instruction. Pictorial representations were employed in the sanctuary (Ex 25:17-22), in Solomon's Temple (1 Kings 6:23-26) and in the "brazen serpent" (Num 21:8,9; 2 Kings 18:4). What the commandment condemns is the veneration or adoration of religious images or pictures since these are human creations and not the Divine Creator.

Applied to the marriage covenant, the second commandment enjoins us to be truthful and faithful to our spouse. Just as we can be unfaithful to God, we can also be unfaithful to our spouse by having false image of her/him in our mind. In practice, this may mean trying to shape our partner into our own image of an "ideal spouse" by nagging or manipulating threats or rewards. It may mean clinging to false images of love relationships with real or fantasy partners. It may also mean making an idol of social relationships outside marriage. This would include forming relationships with friends or relatives that are closer

than those with one's spouse. The second commandment, then, summons us to be truthful and faithful to our spouse by not making idols of anything that can weaken our marriage covenant.

The Third Commandment builds upon the preceding two commandments by inculcating reverence for God: "You shall not take the name of the Lord in vain" (Ex 20:7). Those who serve only the true God and serve Him not through false images or idols but in spirit and truth will show reverence to God by avoiding any careless or unnecessary use of His holy name.

Applied to the marriage covenant, the third commandment summons us to respect and honor our spouses in public and private. In practice, this means respecting our spouses by showing them deference and courtesy both in public and private. It means avoiding belittling our spouses, or cutting them off before the children or on social occasions. It also means not taking our spouses' presence for granted as though they were just another person. The third commandment, then, enjoins us to show respect toward our spouses by avoiding words or actions that can belittle them and thus weaken our marriage covenants.

The Fourth Commandment calls us to honor God by consecrating the Sabbath time to Him: "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor, and do all your work; but the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God" (Ex 20:8-10). The first three commandments are designed to remove obstacles to the true worship of God: the worship of other gods, the worship of God through false images, and the lack of reverence for God.

Now that the obstacles have been removed, the fourth commandment invites us to truly worship God, not through the veneration or adoration of objects, but through the consecration of the Sabbath time to God. Time is the essence of our lives. The way we use our time is indicative of our priorities. By consecrating our Sabbath time to God we show that our covenant commitment to Him is for real. We are willing to offer Him not mere lip-service, but the service of our total being.

Applied to the marriage covenant, the fourth commandment invites us to show our love to our spouses by setting aside a regular and special time for them. In practice, this means learning to put aside our work or personal pleasures on a regular basis, in order to listen to, to enjoy, to celebrate and to cultivate the friendship of our spouses. It means, especially, using the climate of peace and tranquility of the Sabbath day as an opportunity to draw closer to God and to our marital partners. It means taking time, especially on the Sabbath, to walk together, to relax together, to read together, to appreciate good music together, to meditate together, to pray together, to visit together, to bless our spouses in every way their need to be blessed.

The celebration of the Sabbath, the sign of our covenant commitment to God (Ex 31:13; Ez. 20:12), can strengthen the marriage covenant in two ways: theologically and practically. Theologically, the Sabbath being a sign of our sacred covenantal commitment to God, serves to remind us as marital partners of the sanctity of our covenant commitment to our spouses. Practically, the Sabbath offers time and opportunities to Christian couples to strengthen their marriage covenants by coming closer to one another. The Fourth Commandment, then, calls us to show in a concrete

way our covenantal commitment to our marriage partners by setting aside a regular and special time for them.

The Fifth Commandment enjoins us to honor and respect our parents: "Honor your father and your mother" (Ex 20:12). The first four commandments tell us how to show our covenantal commitment to God while the last six commandments teach us how to love our fellow beings. Since parents stand as the representatives of God to their children, it is logical and fitting that the second table of the law begins with our duties toward our parents. The way we respect and obey our parents is indicative of our obedience and respect for God and for those placed in authority over us.

Applied to the marriage covenant, the fifth commandment calls us to rightly relate to our parents and to our spouses' parents. We do not evade our responsibility toward our parents as they grow old. As married persons, we assume responsibility for our parents rather than to them.

In practice, this involves welcoming our respective parents to our home without allowing them to control our home. It involves working out with our spouse how to honor our respective parents in their old age or when ill. It involves seeking our parents' counsel, without allowing them to dictate their ideas. It involves honoring our spouse's parents by not making constant jokes about our in-laws. The fifth commandment, then, enjoins us to rightly relate to the parents of each spouse by respecting and supporting them without allowing them to interfere in our marital relationship and thus weaken our marriage covenant.

The Sixth Commandment orders us to respect others by not taking their lives: "You shall not kill" (Ex 20:13). Jesus magnified the meaning of this commandment to include anger and hate (Matt 5:21,22; cf. 1 John 3: 14,15). This commandment forbids not only physical violence to the body, but also moral injury to the soul. We break it when, by our example, words, or actions, we lead others to sin, thus contributing to the destruction of their souls (Matt 10:28).

Applied to the marriage covenant, the sixth commandment calls us to renounce hatred and destructive anger. In practice, this commandment forbids abusing our spouses verbally or physically. It forbids provoking our spouses to anger by criticising them appearance, speech, actions, or decisions. It forbids nourishing hostile feelings toward our spouses and attempting through words or actions to destroy their integrity.

It forbids harping on at past offenses which have been confessed and forgiven. It challenges us to offer our spouses constructive and not destructive criticism. The sixth commandment, then, calls us to renounce any form of hatred or hostility that can hurt our spouse and thus weaken our marriage covenants.

The Seventh Commandment explicitly enjoins sexual faithfulness: "You shall not commit adultery" (Ex 10:14). Jesus magnified this commandment to include not only the physical act of adultery but also any kind of impure act, word or thought (Matt 5:27,28). The seventh commandment summons us to be faithful to our marriage covenant by refraining from illicit sexual acts or thoughts.

In practice, this commandment calls us to be faithful to our spouse in our body as well as in our mind (Matt 5:27-30). Such fidelity involves among other things: not seeking sexual experiences outside marriage; not allowing the attractiveness of members of the opposite sex to become deliberate fantasy of

intimacy in our mind; repulsing thoughts of sexual lust or perversion and refusing to be sexually stimulated by erotic books, films or magazines; treating our spouse as the object of our love and romance rather than as the means of sexual gratification; viewing sex as a good gift of our Creator and as an expression of mutual and total self-giving to a love relationship. The seventh commandment, then, calls us to honor our marriage covenant by being sexually faithful to our spouse both mentally and physically.

The Eighth Commandment enjoins us to respect others by not stealing what rightfully belongs to them: "You shall not steal" (Ex 20:15). This commandment forbids any act by which we dishonestly obtain the goods or services of others. We may steal from others in many subtle ways: withholding or appropriating what rightfully belongs to others, taking credit for the work done by others, robbing others of their reputation through slanderous gossip, or by depriving others of the remuneration or consideration they have a right to expect.

Applied to the marriage covenant, the eighth commandment summons us to live in true community, without taking from our partners the right of privacy and self-determination. In practice, this means that we must not deprive our spouses of the right to make their decisions in demanding a complete community of property. It means that one spouse must not control the finances so that the other feels dispossessed. It means that we must not hold back any security from our partner as a safety measure or bargaining chip.

It means that no sacrificial demands must be made of our partners in order to please our personal desires or whims. It means that we must not "steal" the individuality, dignity, and power of our spouses, by making decisions for them. It means that, like Zacchaeus, we must be willing to give back what we have taken from our spouse: freedom, money, dignity, power, goods. The eighth commandment, then, calls us to honor our marriage covenants by living in a true community, without "stealing" from our partners their freedom, dignity, money, power, or goods.

The Ninth Commandment enjoins us to respect others by speaking truthfully about them: "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor" (Ex. 20:16). This commandment is violated by speaking evil of others, misrepresenting their motives, misquoting their words, judging their motives, and criticising their efforts. This commandment may also be broken by remaining silent when hearing an innocent person unjustly maligned. We are guilty of bearing "false witness" whenever we tamper with truth in order to benefit ourselves or a cause that we espouse.

Applied to the marriage covenant, the ninth commandment enjoins us to be faithful communicators with our spouses. In practice, this involves respecting our spouses' integrity by not "hitting them below the belt," or by not exaggerating the truth about them, saying, for example, "You never take my feelings in consideration ... You always do what you like" It involves learning to understand not only the words but also the feelings behind the words of our spouse. This enables us to interpret their thoughts and feelings more accurately.

We can bear false witness against our spouses by projecting on them what we think they say or mean by certain actions. We can bear false witness also by quoting our spouses out of context or by suppressing information that would give more accurate pictures of them. The ninth commandment, then, enjoins us

to be faithful communicators with our spouses by learning to accurately understand, interpret and represent their words, actions and feelings.

The Tenth Commandment supplements the eighth by attacking the root from which theft grows, namely, covetousness: "You shall not covet..." (Ex 20:17). This commandment differs from the other nine by prohibiting not only the outward act but also the inner thought from which the action springs. It establishes the important principle that we are accountable before God not only for our actions but also for our intentions. It also reveals the profound truth that we need not be controlled by our natural desire to covet what belongs to others, because by divine grace we can control our unlawful desires and passions (Phil 2:13).

Applied to the marriage covenant, the tenth commandment enjoins us to be content and grateful for our spouses. In practice, this contentment is expressed in different ways: refraining from comparing our spouses' talents or performances with those of other spouses; welcoming and rejoicing over our spouses' achievements, gifts, and experiences without coveting them for ourselves; learning to express gratitude to God every day for giving us the spouses we have; maintaining the proper reserve toward persons of the opposite sex and reserving expressions of special affections for our spouses; avoiding making unreasonable demands on our spouses to force them to become like real or fictitious spouses we covet.

The tenth commandment, then, enjoins us to be content with and for our spouses, by resisting the temptation to look for "greener grass over the other side of the fence."

LOVE

To conclude our look at marriage and God's laws and principles to help make your marriage a successful one I'd like to quote one final time from Cecil Osborne's fantastic book, "The Art of Understanding Your Mate" in which he discusses what true love is all about – the real kind of godly, agape love that will make your marriage a truly joyful one. He writes:

There is on record the case of a woman who said to a marriage counselor, 'I hate my husband! I not only want to divorce him but I want to make life as tough for him as I possibly can.' The counselor told her, 'I'll tell you how to proceed. Start showering him with compliments. Indulge every whim. Then just when he knows how much he needs you – start divorce proceedings. You'll fracture him.'

The wife decided to accept the advice. Six months later the counselor met her at a social function and asked, 'How did things turn out? Did you divorce your husband?'

'Oh, no!' I followed your advice and we've never been happier. I love him with all my heart'...(p.221)

Someone tells of a wealthy husband, considerably older than his wife, who asked her if she would still love him if he lost all his money. She assured him that she would.

"Would you love me if I became an invalid?" he asked.

"Yes, of course."

"But would you still love me if I became blind

"Yes," she said, "I'd still love you."

"But what if I lost all my money, was a blind and deaf invalid, and lost my mind?

"Don't be ridiculous!" she said. "Who could love an old, penniless, blind, deaf imbecile! But I'd take care of you."

The story, probably apocryphal, illustrates two basic factors: the need which everyone feels for unconditional love, and the innate practicality of the female. Everyone, consciously or unconsciously, is seeking unconditional love, despite the fact that no one is capable of giving unconditional love constantly. The desire is perhaps a holdover from the time when the infant does receive unconditional love. He is loved because he is his mother's child. He need not do anything to merit love. His needs are all met and he has no responsibility to do anything whatever other than to be just what he is, a helpless infant.

The infant always resident within us goes on wanting some of this unconditional love and acceptance. The reasonably mature adult learns in time that he must give love as well as receive it. Marriage is a reciprocal arrangement in which, ideally, we each seek to meet the needs of the other. If we meet the needs of the marriage partner in order that our needs shall be met, a kind of barter takes place: I'll do this for you if you'll do that for me. One who loves in a mature sense seeks to meet the needs of another, not in a manipulative sense, but simply because loving expresses itself in a concern for the welfare of the other.

There are three basic, elemental needs, holdovers from childhood, which all of us experience.

1. We want, consciously or unconsciously, to have all of our needs met.
2. We want to control or change those about us so that they will meet these needs.
3. We all yearn for unconditional love.

These three basic inner drives are almost universal. A marriage can be successful to the extent that both husband and wife mature emotionally and spiritually to the point where these early childhood longings are replaced by more mature concepts. Ideally one must achieve sufficient emotional maturity to be able to change these to read:

1. Instead of demanding that all of my needs be met, I will seek to meet the valid needs of my marriage partner.
2. Rather than trying to change others, I will recognize that I cannot change anyone else. I can change only myself, and when I change, others tend—in time—to change in relation to me.
3. Instead of expecting unconditional love, I will face the fact that no one can give this kind of limitless love consistently. I will give love rather than demanding or expecting it, believing that love begets love...(p.236-238)

Love, far from being just an emotion, is a whole set of responses. It can involve, in a typical marriage, any or all of the following actions:

- 1. Listening. What the marriage partner has to say may not seem important to you, but it is important to the one relating it. Love implies caring enough to listen attentively. Usually, if a problem is being discussed, there is no need to**

offer solutions Just listening with interest is an act of love. If one is tired or bored, it is not always easy. But love goes the second mile and listens; at that moment. Listening is an act of love.

2. Thoughtfulness and consideration. To love means to be concerned for the welfare of another "Give and it shall be given unto you," said Jesus. If you have needs which are unmet, instead of making demands or accusations, try to meet the needs of our marriage partner. Love begets love; resentment begets hostility; rejection begets rejection.

Many men are not as thoughtful as they might be concerning things which are important to their wives. Wedding anniversaries, birthdays, and special occasions need attention. I was aware of this fact, but bungled it badly early in my marriage, to my consternation. I had put in my date book a reminder to purchase a birthday gift for my wife. But fearful that I might forget, I asked my secretary to put it on her calendar and remind me a day or so in advance. My wife happened to be in the outer office one day, and as it would have to be, she happened to glance at my secretary's open desk reminder, on which was written: "Remind Dr. O to get birthday gift for wife." Understandably my wife reacted with some indignation later. "If you can't remember by yourself, you can forget it." She was right.

3. Compromise. Since any two persons have incompatible goals, it is obvious that in the intimate relationship of marriage there will have to be a lifetime of cheerful compromises.

If one wants to spend a vacation camping, and the other prefers visiting relatives, it doesn't mean that either is unreasonable. You can visit relatives one summer and go camping the following year, or spend half the vacation with relatives and the other half camping. Any compromise must be made with no thought of "giving in." Only the immature or infantile expect to have all of their needs met all of the time. If we can achieve our goals half the time in the marriage relationship, that isn't too bad. And, one's displeasure over visiting relatives should not be taken out on the relatives or in futile recriminations later. Similarly, one who hates camping must not make the experience miserable for the other by constant complaints.

4. Avoidance of attack and accusation. When we are attacked or criticized, we instinctively defend ourselves, or counterattack. This is a poor basis for communication. However, we each have a perfect right—in fact, a duty—to let the other know how we feel about matters that are important to us. Instead of the accusation, which puts the other immediately in the wrong, one can begin by saying, "When you do that it makes me feel angry." One's anger may be infantile or reasonable, as the case may be. We are responsible for our own reaction, but the feeling is valid, and we have a right to express it. We are not making any demand that the other shall change, just communicating our feelings.

Instead of saying, "I have no intention of spending my vacation visiting your neurotic relatives, and it's selfish of you to expect me to do so," one might better phrase it, "Visiting relatives, either yours or mine, is not my idea of how to spend a restful vacation; but perhaps we can work out some kind of a compromise so we will both be satisfied."

"You never take me any place!" is likely to produce a defensive reaction. Abandoning the martyr-stance or the accusatory tone, one might better say, "Honey, we've both been knocking ourselves out lately. How about dinner out

this week or next?" Perhaps more important than the actual wording is the feeling that accompanies it. Abandon the judgmental, critical, attacking method, and use a loving approach. If you don't feel loved, expressing this fact with hostility is not likely to make you more lovable.

5. Meeting valid needs. Instead of insisting that your needs be met, try to meet all of the valid needs of the other. We are all selfish to some degree. Love is unselfish and seeks to discover and satisfy the needs of others.

Often, because humans are egocentric, neither husband nor wife goes to the trouble to discover the basic needs of the other. Displaying a fourth of the tender solicitude shown during courtship would go a long way toward creating a happier marriage. Instead of brooding silently or talking angrily about one's unmet needs, a far better solution would be to sit down for an hour-long discussion concerning needs.

A husband might well ask his wife, "Will you tell me the ways in which I could make you happier?"

She, in turn, could appropriately say, "I'll make out a list, but I'd feel better about it if you'd make out a list of the ways in which I could make you happier." A discussion based on their lists can be the starting point for a new relationship.

6. Forgiveness. Learn to forgive and refuse to dig up the past. "To err is human, to forgive is divine." We tap our inner divinity when we can forgive. No one says it is easy to forgive hurts, but it is the price we must pay for inner peace and for a harmonious relationship. Again it needs to be emphasized that love is not just a feeling, but also an action; to forgive is a loving act.

A husband confessed his infidelity to his wife in my presence. At first she could not forgive or accept him back. Eventually, however, she forgave him and they established a better marriage than ever, due in part to a year or two in a sharing group. Her ability to forgive rendered her a more mature person...

7. Avoidance of competition. Make sure you are not competing with each other. Everyone knows of instances in which a wife has little or nothing to say in a group, but who, when her husband is not present, opens up and becomes a real person in her own right. The converse is also common, with a wife doing all the talking for both.

Sometimes this can be attributed to the fact that one or the other is naturally timid, but when a capable and otherwise responsive person permits the marriage partner to take over the conversation and answer for both of them, there is a power struggle going on.

I recall a dinner party during which a highly successful man of great ability was constantly interrupted by his wife. She corrected him on minor details and challenged most of his quiet observations. He eventually subsided and permitted her to carry on her loud-voiced monologue.

Just as often an overly aggressive husband is determined to dominate his wife in public and at home. I recall a thoroughly competent man with a deep sense of insecurity who made every effort to ridicule his wife in public. One sensed that he was expressing the buried hostility he could not express at home.

The power struggle goes on in millions of homes. Each has a point to prove or a position to defend or some subtle punishment to mete out. A mature and lasting love has in it elements of deep concern for others. It does not seek to control or to change another person. It is not defensive or easily upset. It looks for ways to meet the needs of others.

Love is gentle, but not weak. One who loves deeply also loves himself properly and respects himself, mingling elements of both humility and strength.

One who is capable of loving fully is also capable of accepting love, feeling worthy of love. Loving God and truth, one loves himself and others in equal amounts. Love is the ultimate in living and expresses itself best by giving, without thought of return. Love is, in the final analysis, the ultimate in human growth and maturity(p.254-258).

CONCLUSION

This kind of mature love in all its multi-faceted aspects is what God wants us to learn through the gift of marriage. Without this kind of mature love marriages can easily fail but with it marriage truly becomes a little piece of heaven right here on earth.