

4 HUSBAND-WIFE RELATIONSHIP

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4.1 Dating Etiquette

One might ask why this subject is in the Husband-Wife Relationship chapter. The reason is because dating should be undertaken with the idea of eventually getting married. Any other motive will lead to fornication, which to Christians is a sin. We have to date before we can get married and become husband and wife, however, so we need to understand what God expects out of dating.

4.1.1 The Stages of Intimacy

Dr. James Dobson in his book *Love for a Lifetime* describes the 12 stages of intimacy that a romantic relationship must traverse through to reach full maturity:¹

1. Eye to body. A glance reveals much about a person—sex, size, shape, age, personality and status. The importance people place on these criteria determines whether or not they will be attracted to each other.
2. Eye to eye. When the man and woman who are strangers to each other exchange glances, their most natural reaction is to look away, usually with embarrassment. If their eyes meet again, they may smile, which signals that they might like to become better acquainted.
3. Voice to voice. Their initial conversations are trivial and include questions like “What is your name?” or “What do you do for a living?” During this long stage the two people learn about each other’s opinions, pastimes, activities, habits, hobbies, likes and dislikes. If they’re compatible, they become friends.
4. Hand to hand. The first instance of physical contact between the couple is usually a nonromantic occasion such as when the man helps the woman descend a high step or aids her across an obstacle. At this point either of the individuals can withdraw from the relationship without rejecting the other. However, if continued, hand-to-hand contact will eventually become an evidence of the couple’s romantic attachment to each other.
5. Hand to shoulder. This affectionate embrace is still noncommittal. It is a “buddy” type position in which the man and woman are side by side. They are more concerned with the world in front of them than they are with each other. The hand-to-shoulder contact reveals a relationship that is more than a close friendship, but probably not real love.
6. Hand to waist. Because this is something two people of the same sex would not ordinarily do, it is clearly romantic. They are close enough to be sharing secrets or intimate language with each other. Yet, as they walk side by side with hand to waist, they are still facing forward.
7. Face to face. This level of contact involves gazing into one another’s eyes, hugging and kissing. If none of the previous steps were skipped, the man and woman will have developed a special code from experience that enables them to engage in deep communication with very few words. At this point, sexual desire becomes an important factor in the relationship.
8. Hand to head. This is an extension of the previous stage. The man and woman tend to cradle or stroke each other’s head while kissing or talking. Rarely do individuals in our culture touch the head of another person unless they are either romantically involved or are family members. It is a designation of emotional closeness.
- 9-12. The final steps. The last four levels of involvement are distinctly sexual and private. They are (9) Hand to body, (10) Mouth to Breast, (11) Touching below the waist, and (12) Intercourse.

¹ *Love for a Lifetime*, Dr. James Dobson, Multnomah Press, 1987, ISBN 0-88070-174-9, pp. 32-34.

Obviously, the final acts of physical contact should be reserved for the marital relationship, since they are progressively sexual and intensely personal.

The steps of intimacy described above must proceed slowly if a male-female relationship is to achieve its full potential. When two people love each other deeply and are committed for life, they have usually developed a great volume of understandings or shared expectations between them that would be considered insignificant to anyone else. They share countless private memories unknown to the rest of the world. That is in large measure where their sense of specialness to one another originates. Furthermore, the critical factor is that they have taken these steps in *sequence*. When later stages are reached prematurely, such as when couples kiss passionately on the first date or have sexual intercourse before marriage, something precious is lost from the relationship. Instead, their courtship should be nurtured through leisurely walks and talks and “lovers’ secrets” that lay the foundation for mutual intimacy. Now we can see how the present environment of sexual permissiveness and lust serves to weaken the institution of marriage and undermine the stability of the family.

Before we tuck away this understanding of bonded commitments, we should emphasize that this concept applies not only to courtship experiences. The most successful marriages are those wherein husbands and wives journey through the twelve steps regularly in their daily lives. Touching and talking and holding hands and gazing into one another’s eyes and building memories are as important to partners in their mid-life years as rambunctious twenty year olds. Indeed, the best way to invigorate a tired sex life is to walk through the twelve steps of courtship regularly and with gusto! Conversely, when sexual intercourse is experienced without the stages of intimacy that should have preceded it in prior days, the woman is likely to feel “used and abused.” To those who are already married and now regret that the stages of bonding were taken out of order or that important steps were skipped altogether, it is not too late to work your way through them anew. I know of no better way to draw close to the person you love.

Intimacy must proceed slowly if a relationship is to achieve its full potential.

4.1.2 General Sexual Guidelines for Dating²

Below are some basic guidelines about dating:

1. Sexual intercourse outside of marriage is forbidden by the word of God. This type of sin is called fornication in the Bible. Scriptures in the Bible that forbid this include:
 - 1.1. 1 Cor. 6:18: “Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body.”
 - 1.2. 1 Thess. 4:3-6: “For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality; that each of you should know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, not in passion of lust, like the Gentiles who do not know God; that no one should take advantage of and defraud his brother in this matter, because the Lord is avenger of all such, as we have forewarned you and testified.”
2. Don’t rush the courtship period when you feel you have found the “one and only.” Frank Sinatra said it musically, “Take it nice and easy, making all the stops along the way.” At least a year is needed to allow the bonding process to occur—and even longer in some cases.

² Love for a Lifetime, Dr. James Dobson, Multnomah Press, 1987, ISBN 0-88070-174-9, pp. 35-36.

3. Ensure that you will be equally yoked to someone who has the same spiritual beliefs as you (2 Cor. 6:14). This means if you are a Christian, then you should marry a Christian. Likewise, even prospective spouses who are Christians should only seek a spouse who has the same degree of spiritual commitment as them.
4. Make the final choice of a marital partner very carefully and prayerfully..never impulsively or recklessly. You are playing for keeps now. Bring to bear every ounce of intelligence and discretion available to you, and then yield the ultimate decision to the will of the Lord. He will guide you if you don't run ahead of Him.
5. Proceed through the first nine stages of intimacy one at a time and in the order indicated.
6. Do not progress to stages 10-12 before marriage. Enter the marriage bed as a virgin. If it's too late to preserve your virginity, initiate a policy of abstinence today...and don't waiver from it until you are wed.
7. Seek to marry a virgin. This mutual purity gives special meaning to sex in marriage. No other human being has invaded the secret world that the two of you share, because you reserved yourselves exclusively for one another's pleasure and love. By following this Biblical plan, you also protect the reproduction system form new viruses, bacteria and fungi transmitted during casual intercourse. It is now known that when you sleep with a promiscuous partner, you are having sex with every person that individual has slept with in the past ten years! Virginity before marriage is by far the healthiest approach.
8. Remain faithful to your marriage partner for life. No exceptions!
9. Continue to meander through the stages of bonding throughout your married life, enjoying the wonder of intimate love.

4.1.3 Principles of Loving Toughness During Courtship/Dating³

Below are sixteen suggestions that will help you conform to the principles of loving toughness in matters of dating and courtship and secure a lasting and loving relationship firmly rooted in mutual respect, maturity, and responsibility:

1. Don't let the relationship move too fast in its infancy. The phrase "too hot not to cool down" has validity. Take it one step at a time.
2. Don't discuss your personal inadequacies and flaws in great detail when the relationship is new. No matter how warm and accepting your friend may be, any great revelation of low self-esteem or embarrassing weaknesses can be fatal when interpersonal "valleys" occur. And they *will* occur.
3. Remember that respect precedes love. Built it stone upon stone.
4. Don't call too often on the phone or give the other person an opportunity to get tired of you.
5. Don't be too quick to reveal your desire to get married--or that you think you've just found Mr. Wonderful or Miss Marvelous. If your partner has not arrived at the same conclusion, you'll throw him or her into panic.
6. *Most important.* Relationships are constantly being "tested" by cautious lovers who like to nibble at the bait before swallowing the hook. This testing procedure takes many forms, but is usually involves pulling backward from the other person to see what will happen. Perhaps a foolish fight is initiated. Maybe two weeks will pass without a phone call. Or sometimes flirtation occurs with a rival. In each instance, the question being asked is, "How important am I to you and what would you do if you lost me?" An even more basic issue lies below that one. It wants to know, "How free am I to leave if I want to?" It is incredibly important in these instances to appear poised,

³ Portions from *Love Must Be Tough*, Dr. James Dobson, Word Publishing, 1983, ISBN 0-8499-0348-3, pp. 190-193

secure and equally independent. Do not grasp the other person and beg for mercy. Some people remain single throughout life because they cannot resist the temptation to grovel when the test occurs.

7. Extending the same concept, keep in mind that virtually every dating relationship that continues for a year or more and seems to be moving toward marriage will be given the ultimate test. A breakup will occur, motivated by only one of the lovers. The rejected individual should know that their future together depends on the skill with which he/she handles that crisis. If the hurting individual can remain calm, the next two steps may be reconciliation and marriage. It often happens that way. If not, then no amount of pleading will change anything.
8. Do not expect anyone to meet *all* your emotional needs. Maintain interests and activities outside that romantic relationship, even after marriage.
9. Guard against selfishness in your love affair. Neither the man nor the woman should do all the giving. I once broke up with a girl because she let me take her to nice places, bring her flowers, buy her lunch, etc. I wanted to do these things, but expected her to reciprocate in some way. She didn't, and that was a clear sign to me that she would have made a fickle and demanding marital partner.
10. Beware of blindness to obvious warning signs that tell you that your potential husband or wife is basically disloyal, hateful, spiritually committed, hooked on drugs or alcohol, given to selfishness, etc. Believe me, a bad marriage is far worse than the most lonely instance of singleness.
11. Don't marry the person you think you can live with; marry only the individual you think you can't live without.
12. Be careful to defend the "line of respect," even during a dating relationship. A man *should* open doors for a woman on a formal evening; a woman should speak respectfully of her escort when in public, etc. If you don't preserve this delicate line when the foundations of marriage are being laid, it will be virtually impossible to construct them later.
13. Do not equate human worth with flawless beauty or handsomeness! If you require physical perfection in your mate, he or she will make the same demands of you. Don't let love escape you because of the false values of your culture. In the same vein, be careful not to *compare* yourself with others--which is the root of all inferiority. Likewise, it should be a cause of great concern to you if your dating partner likes to compare you to others. This can lead to emotional abuse later.
14. Regardless of how brilliant the love affair has been, take time to "check your assumptions" with your partner before committing yourself to marriage. It is surprising how often men and women plunge toward matrimony without ever becoming aware of major differences in expectation between them. For example:
 - 14.1. Do you want to have children? How soon? How many?
 - 14.2. Where will you live?
 - 14.3. Will the wife work? How soon? How about after the children are born?
 - 14.4. Who will lead in the relationship? What does that *really* mean?
 - 14.5. How will you relate to your in-laws?
 - 14.6. How will money be spent?
 - 14.7. Where will you attend church?

These and dozens of other "assumptions" should be discussed item by item, perhaps with the help of a premarital counselor. Many future struggles can be avoided by coming to terms with potential areas of disagreement. If the differences are great enough, it is even possible that the marriage should never occur.
15. Finally, sexual familiarity can be deadly to a relationship. In addition to the many moral, spiritual and physical reasons for remaining virgins until marriage, there are numerous psychological and interpersonal advantages to the exercise of self-control and discipline. Though it's an old-fashioned

notion, perhaps, it is still true that men do not respect "easy" women and often become bored with those who have held nothing in reserve. Likewise, women often disrespect men who have only one thing on their minds. Both sexes need to remember how to use a very ancient word. It's pronounced "NO!".

4.1.4 Guidelines for Parents Dealing with Dating Children

1. Parents be best friends with your children and talk about dating issues. When you can be friends with your children and have a clear path of communication, it is much easier to discuss sensitive personal issues such as intimacy and sex with them. Also, when parents have a good relationship with their children, then they have more on deposit in the emotional bank account with their children that will be useful later should they need to make a withdrawal in the process of correcting bad behavior of their children through rebuke, reproof, or exhortation.
2. Parents should talk candidly about sex with their teenage children. They should warn their children about the drastic consequences of sexual sin and fornication, and why they should avoid it at all costs. Talk about your own experiences in dating and courtship with your children and the boundaries you set and why, but in an age-appropriate manner that does not offend them or give them more than they can handle. Watch over them and keep them out of trouble.
3. To counteract the popular culture, remind them that the safest sex is no sex before marriage.

4.2 Premarital Inventory and Planning

Before you marry, there are a lot of things you need to understand about each other. As we said before, you should make your choice of marital partner very carefully and prayerfully. You can't do this without a lot of information about your prospective spouse. This section is devoted to facilitating the process of getting to know your spouse better to ensure that you make a wise and informed choice, because it may be the most important decision of your lifetime and of the lifetimes of your children and their children.

4.2.1 Questions to ask a prospective spouse

4.2.1.1 Family Background

"You're just like your mother!" "You act the same way your father does!" These common statements are heard time and time again. In many respects, we are a product of our environment for our family backgrounds do affect our lives.

The way our parents treated us many times affects the way we will treat our spouse. Family traditions or the lack of traditions will influence our future marriage. The social and financial status of our childhood years plays an important part in our adult thinking.

How much do you know about the family background of your future marriage partner? Are there potential problem areas? It has been said that when you marry, you marry the family. How well do you know your fiancé's family? Are you accepted by them? How well do they know you?

Answer the following questions and then discuss them together. Your discussions may trigger other family background questions which will, hopefully, help you gain a deeper insight into each other and your families.

1. How old were your parents when you were born? Father: ____ Mother: ____
2. List your brothers and sisters in order of birth and include yourself:
 - 2.1. _____ Age _____
 - 2.2. _____ Age _____
 - 2.3. _____ Age _____
 - 2.4. _____ Age _____
 - 2.5. _____ Age _____
3. Were your parents ever: Separated Divorced Widowed?
 How old were you at the time? _____
 My parent's divorce affected me by:

 Who raised you? Father Mother
 Other: _____
4. My parents are still living: Yes No
5. My parents' occupations are:
 Father: _____
 Mother: _____
6. I would describe my parents' marriage as: Very poor Sometimes troubled Middle-of-the-road Usually happy Very happy
7. I feel the leader in my home was: Father Mother Neither They fought for leadership
8. Describe your relationship with your:

<i>Father:</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Affectionate <input type="checkbox"/> Accepted <input type="checkbox"/> Tolerated <input type="checkbox"/> Rejected <input type="checkbox"/> Persecuted <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____	<i>Mother:</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Affectionate <input type="checkbox"/> Accepted <input type="checkbox"/> Tolerated <input type="checkbox"/> Rejected <input type="checkbox"/> Persecuted <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____
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9. Describe the discipline of your:

<i>Father:</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Domineering <input type="checkbox"/> Strict	<i>Mother:</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Domineering <input type="checkbox"/> Strict
---	---

- Firm but kindly
- Permissive
- Indulgent
- Other _____

- Firm but kindly
- Permissive
- Indulgent
- Other _____

10. I would describe my childhood as:

- Very poor
- Sometimes troubled
- Middle-of-the-road
- Usually happy
- Very happy
- Other:

11. My parents think my marriage is:

12. My parent's opinions towards my fiance are:

13. Regarding my marriage, the parents of my fiance think that:

14. The type of relationship I have with the parts of my fiance is:

15. I see the following potential trouble points with my in-laws:

16. When I encounter difficulties with my in-laws, I will:

17. I think the following traditions and family traits of my family will affect my marriage:

18. After my marriage, if we live in the same house with my in-laws, I will:

19. When my in-laws give advice, I will:

20. I have the following questions about in-laws:

4.2.1.2 Sexuality⁴

The following questions are frank and deal with common problems encountered in giving sexual counseling. Most couples do not talk about sexual matters very deeply, even after they are married. These questions deal with real issues. A great deal of frustration, hurt, fear and anger could be eliminated if these issues were faced by the couple before they became crisis points in what is designed by God to be a most beautiful experience.

May I encourage you to discuss together the following questions:

1. Have you had a physical examination for your marriage? Yes No

2. Do you have any health problems? Explain:

3. At this particular time, I think about sex?

- 3.1. Seldom
 3.2. Periodically
 3.3. Frequently
 3.4. Regularly

4. My present feelings about sex are: Disturbed Fearful Anxious Neutral Expectant Excited Intrigued

5. Do you have any sexual inhibitions, fears or awkward feelings? Explain:

6. What was your first impression of your parent's sex life? Fulfilling Warm Casual Neutral Tolerant Cold Empty

7. Were you the victim of any unpleasant sexual experience as a child, adolescent or adult? No Indecent exposure Homosexual Molested Raped Incest

8. Who do you think is responsible for birth control? Husband Wife Both

9. In planning to postpone having children, the form of birth control method I prefer is Withdrawal Rhythm Douche Foam Vaginal suppositories Contraceptive jelly Condom Diaphragm Cervical Cap IUD Birth control pills Vasectomy Hysterectomy Abortion

10. Who do you think should initiate sexual activity? _____

⁴ How Can I Be Sure?, Bob Phillips, 1978, pp. 81-96, Harvest House Publishers, Eugene Oregon, ISBN 0-89081-073-7.

Why? _____

11. Who do you think should determine the way, the place, how often, length of time and variety of sexual activity? _____

12. How do you feel about seeing your partner nude? _____

13. How do you feel about having your partner seeing you nude? _____

14. State your thoughts about the following:

Lip kissing: _____

Tongue kissing: _____

Your partner kissing your body: _____

Kissing of your partner's body: _____

Caressing your partner's body: _____

Your partner caressing your body: _____

Kissing of your partner's genitals: _____

Your partner kissing your genitals: _____

Bringing your partner to a climax by hand: _____

Your partner bringing you to a climax by hand: _____

Bringing your partner to a climax by oral stimulation: _____

Your partner bringing you to a climax by oral stimulation: _____

15. How important do you think simultaneous orgasm is?

16. A woman reaches orgasm by:

17. Why is it important to communicate about sexual desires?

18. Why is it important to verbally tell your partner what stimulates you sexually?

19. What are your thoughts about intercourse during the wife's menstrual period?

20. What type of menstrual period do you/does your fiance have?

21. How many times per week do you think that you would like to have intercourse? _____

22. I think the act of intercourse should last:

23. I would prefer a lovemaking environment that includes (lighting, music, etc.):

24. Privacy in lovemaking is important because:

25. At what time of day should lovemaking take place? _____

26. What are your thoughts as to where lovemaking should take place?

27. What are your thoughts about various positions in intercourse? _____

28. What will you do if you find the man has difficulty in maintaining erection?

29. What will you do if you find the man has difficulty with premature ejaculation?

30. What will you do when you find the woman cannot reach a climax?

31. What will you do if you find the woman cannot reach a climax with the penis inserted into the vagina?

32. How important do you think the act of intercourse is on the Honeymoon night?

33. What will you do when you find the husband cannot make entrance into his wife and complete the act of intercourse due to the tightened vaginal muscles or pain in the vaginal area?

34. Suppose that you have been married for a period of time, and one day you discover your mate masturbating. What will you do?

35. Tell what you might do if you find that your partner does not like the act of intercourse?

36. How do men and women differ in their readiness for sexual climax?

37. If and when I discovered my partner was romantically interested in another person, I would:

38. Why are things like words, gentle touch and kind deeds important in the lovemaking process?

39. Do you think that you will be able to refuse sexual requests of your partner without offending him/her? () Yes () No () Uncertain
What will you say?

40. How much bathroom privacy do you feel is needed?

41. I have a lack of sexual knowledge in the following areas:

42. How tense are you as you answer these questions?

43. Do you believe in counseling for sexual problems? () Yes () No () Uncertain.

44. Who would you feel free to talk with concerning sexual problems?

45. After reading 1 Corinthians 6:15-20 and 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8, state what you think is God's view of premarital intercourse:

46. In Hebrews 13:4 it says, "Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure." I think this means:

47. After reading 1 Corinthians 7:3-5, the concept I think the writer is trying to convey is:

48. I have the following questions about sexual matters:

4.2.1.3 Children

In many premarital counseling programs the issue of child rearing is not dealt with in great detail. This is usually because of a time factor, and because most couples are more concerned with immediate issues such as finances, marriage plans and the sexual side of marriage.

Some couples don not plan for children or use forms of birth control. Others can't wait to have children. What are your thoughts? Do you feel you should have children right away or do you plan to get to know your marriage partner better before having children? How long should a couple wait?

The questions listed below are designed to help you formulate your thoughts and verbally set forth a plan for child rearing. Share together your thinking in this important area of marriage.

1. Do you plan to have children? () Yes () No () Undecided

2. How many children would you like to have?_____

3. How long would you like to wait before having children? _____
4. Should a couple wait until they can afford to have children? () Yes () No () Undecided
5. I feel that it is important for the father to be present at the birth of the child. () Yes () No () Undecided
6. If we cannot have children, my feelings about adoption are:

7. What are your feelings if you would have only boys or only girls?

8. How much should a husband participate in the care of a baby?

9. What are your feelings toward sharing equally in all of the activities of care and raising of children? (feeding, changing diapers, late night responsibilities, etc.)

10. The names of children should be determined by:

11. The responsibility for the discipline of the children lies with: () Husband () Wife () Both
12. I want my children to learn the following values, rules, and characteristics:

13. My parents used the following discipline with me:

14. I will want to discipline my children in the following ways:
Early years:

Middle years:

Teen years:

15. Who should be responsible for assisting children with homework? () Husband () Wife () Both
16. My thoughts with regard to leaving children with baby-sitters are:

17. Who is responsible for buying clothes for the children? () Husband () Wife () Both
Comments:

18. Who decides what gifts to buy for the children? () Husband () Wife () Both

19. I feel that the place of pets in the home is:

20. I feel that favoritism of children in the home is:

21. What is your opinion about standing behind your mates' discipline of the children?

22. If you have children by a previous marriage, what will you want the relationship to be with the new father/mother?

23. If you have children by a former marriage, who will discipline your children?

24. If you have children by a former marriage, do you foresee any problems with visiting rights of the divorced parent? Explain:

25. In discipline, how strict do you think parents should be?:

26. I think the most important thing in child discipline is:

27. I think that praising your children involves:

28. How much should children sacrifice for their children?

29. What are your thoughts about parents caring more for the children than for each other?

30. I think that children should have the following privileges:

Early years:

Middle years:

Teen years:

31. What message do you think is conveyed in Psalm 127 and Psalm 128?

32. Read Proverbs 22:6, 22:15; 13:24; 23:13-14; 29:15; 19:18; 29:17; Hebrews 12:5-11; Proverbs 20:30; Ephesians 6:4. After reading these verses, I think that God's attitude toward discipline is:

33. I think that having children will teach me the following lessons:

34. I have the following questions concerning child rearing:

4.2.1.4 Communication

Reuel Howe, a gifted communicator feels that, "dialogue is to love, what blood is to the body. When the flow of blood stops, the body dies. When dialogue stops, love dies and resentment and hate are born. But dialogue can restore a dead relationship. Indeed, this is the miracle of dialogue: it can bring relationship into being, and it can bring into being once again a relationship that has died."⁵

Marjorie Umphrey in her book *Getting To Know You* defines communication as the following:

1. Communication is giving and receiving a message.
2. Communication is giving of oneself.
3. Communication is sharing ideas, feelings and moments with another person.
4. Communication is experiencing another human being.
5. Communication is the giving and receiving of an emotional stroke.

⁵ *The Miracle of Dialogue*, Ruel L. Howe, 1964, The Seabury Press, p. 3.

- 6. Communication is getting my needs met.
- 7. Communication is meeting another person's needs.
- 8. Communication is looking at and seeing what another person is saying.
- 9. Communication is listening and hearing what others are saying.
- 10. Communication is my face and body talking.
- 11. Communication is using all my senses to recognize what the other's face and body and voice is saying.
- 12. Communication is putting myself in other's place.
- 13. Communication is touching.
- 14. Communication is reaching out.
- 15. Communication is tenderness and caressing.
- 16. Communication is words on the printed page.
- 17. Communication is allowing someone else to intrude into your world of thoughts.
- 18. Communication is expression through the arts.
- 19. Communication is spiritual.

How well are you communicating? How open are you with each other? Do you feel free enough for your future life partner to get to know the real you? Answer the following questions and explore with your fiance your deeper thoughts and feelings:

1. I think a person can change their mate by:

2. When I am emotionally irritated or bothered, my tendency is to: () act out or come on strong () withdraw and go into quiet irritation.

3. State your opinion about keeping each other informed regarding schedules and whereabouts:

4. What will you do when your companion continually refers to your faults?:

5. List things you think you would tale about at mealtimes:

6. How much should you share with your partner about work and other interests?

7. I can become more aware of my mates feelings by:

8. How much time should be devoted to leisure time activities?

9. How much time should be devoted to family?

10. How much time should be devoted to former friends?

11. What I find my mate remaining silent for a long period of time, I will:

12. To what extent do you think your mate should pursue his/her interests, activities and sports?

13. When I find that my mate is not as affectionate as I would like, I will:

14. When my mate yells at me, I will:

15. I think I can lift the spirits of my mate when he/she is depressed or discouraged by:

16. When you have a major illness strike your mate how will you react?

17. When my mate does something that displeases me, I will:

18. You may love your mate but what are your thoughts about him/her being your friend?

19. When my mate sulks, whines or pouts, I will:

20. When I find that my mate is not listening to me, I will:

21. When my mate uses the phrases "You always," "You never," or "Everytime," I will respond by:

22. What are your thoughts about sharing unpleasant things that happen during the day?

23. I think I can help develop my mate's self-image by:

24. In clarifying the misunderstood statements, I will:

25. I think that my mate and I need to improve our communication in the following areas:

26. I think that my mate would like to change the following qualities or behaviors in me:

27. I express love to my mate in the following ways:

28. What are your feelings about marriage counselors and pastors helping you to solve personal and marital problems? :

29. I have the following educational plans:

30. I have the following vocational plans:

31. I would like to ask the following questions about communication in marriage:

ADDITIONAL COMMUNICATION QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. I think that the best time of day to talk over marital difficulties is:
2. The types of things that get on my nerves are:
3. State your opinion about your partner talking about former sweethearts or a former spouse:
4. When my mate says one thing and means another, I will:
5. I can compliment and praise my spouse more by:
6. When my mate goes out often with the guys/girls, I feel:
7. What are your thoughts about telling jokes at your partner's expenses?
8. What are your opinions about correcting your mate in public?
9. I like to do the following activities with my mate:
10. When I find it difficult to confide in my mate, I will:
11. How can you help your mate when he/she is upset because of work, children or some conflict with another person outside of your marriage? How much sympathy do you give? How much encouragement? How much correction?
12. What is your opinion about discussing your spouse's faults in public?
13. What are your thoughts about non-verbal communication in marriage?
14. What are your thoughts about arguing in public?
15. It has been said that marriage is a fifty-fifty partnership. What do you think?
16. I am easily offended in the following ways:
17. What are your thoughts about discussing in-laws in public?
18. I think that personality clashes are caused by:
19. I think that jealousy and possessiveness are caused by:
20. How important do you think it is for a husband and wife to discuss intellectual and emotional issues like race relations, politics, religion, etc.?

4.2.1.5 Decisions in Marriage

There are many decisions that have to be made in a marriage. Some are made by the husband, some are made by the wife and some are shared equally. Read over the following list of decisions and indicate who you feel should make the decision. (H for husbands..W for wives...B for both) then compare your answers with the answers of your fiancé.

1. Who decides on formal or informal engagement? _____
2. Who decides date of wedding? _____
3. Who decides what type of wedding? _____
4. Who decides whether to have a honeymoon? _____
5. Who decides where to go on a honeymoon? _____
6. Who decides where to live? _____
7. Who decides when to move? _____
8. Who decides whether the wife should work? _____
9. Who decides whether the wife should give up her job when a child is born? _____
10. Who decides financial decisions? _____
11. Who decides if incomes are to be shared? _____

12. Who decides who will handle the checkbook? _____
13. Who decides about borrowing money and going into debt? _____
14. Who decides on the budget? _____
15. Who makes justified complaints to tradesmen? _____
16. Who decides to buy a car? _____
17. Whose name is the car in? _____
18. Who looks after the car? _____
19. Who decides which house to buy? _____
20. Whose name is it in? _____
21. Who decides on the interior decor? _____
22. Who decides on the exterior decor? _____
23. Who decides on the furnishings? _____
24. Who decides on the landscaping? _____
25. Who takes care of the yard work? _____
26. Who is responsible for life and health insurance? _____
27. Who makes retirement plans? _____
28. Who decides activities after retirement? _____
29. Who takes the active role in sex? _____
30. Who decides whether to have children? _____
31. Who takes responsibility for contraception? _____
32. Who decides when to have children? _____
33. Who decides how many children to have? _____
34. Who takes responsibility in emergencies? _____
35. Who helps with the homework? _____
36. Who decides political issues for the family? _____
37. Who decides which pre-marriage friends to socialize with? _____
38. Who invites people to the house? _____
39. Who chooses television programs? _____
40. Whose food tastes prevail? _____
41. Who plans the day-by-day meals? _____
42. Who does the grocery shopping for the family? _____
43. Who decides when to go out? _____
44. Who decides where to go out? _____
45. Who decides what to do and where to go on vacations? _____
46. With whose relatives do you keep in touch? _____
47. Whose job is it to keep in touch with the relatives? _____
48. Who remembers anniversaries and birthdays? _____
49. Who copes with family disasters? _____
50. Who decides whether to go to church or not? _____
51. Who decides which church to go to? _____

4.2.1.6 **Finances**

Every couple experiences some degree of conflict or frustration in the area of finances. Next to communication and sex, finances rate among the big three of marital problems. The vast majority of couples who go into divorce courts are head over heels in debt.

How do you handle finances? are you a spender or a saver? Do you like to use charge cards? Do you have a budget? Robert J. Hastings thinks that, "Money management is not so much a technique as it is an attitude. And when we talk about attitudes, we are dealing with emotions. Thus, money management is basically self-management or control of one's emotions. Unless one learns to control himself, he is no more likely to control his money than he is to discipline his habits, his time or his temper. Undisciplined money usually spells undisciplined persons." ⁶

1. My attitude about the wife working outside the home is:

2. State your attitude about the wife working outside the home after the birth of children:

3. Are you going to pool financial resources? (gifts, inheritances, savings and earnings). Explain:

4. If you have been married before, do you have any reservations or do you feel that there will be any problems in pooling finances from the former marriage? (gifts, properties, savings, investments, insurance, trust funds or wills, etc) Explain:

5. I foresee the following problems with the "my money, your money" feelings:

6. My attitude toward debt, credit cards, borrowing money and buying on time is:

7. When we experience financial reverses (unemployment, debt, sickness, etc.) I plan to:

8. Who will handle the checkbook?

9. Who will pay the bills?

10. What is your plan for budgeting? "

⁶ *The "10-70-20" Formula for Wealth*: Form the Marriage Affair, Robert J. Hastings, Tyndale House Publishers, 1971, p. 363.

11. How generous are you?

12. What are your thoughts about giving? (church, charities, relatives, etc):

13. What are your thoughts about saving money? (savings accounts, investments, property, retirement)

14. What are your thoughts about life insurance?

15. What are your thoughts about health insurance?:

16. How do you feel about writing a will?

17. What are your thoughts about the possibility of someday being financially responsible for your in-laws?

18. How do you feel about the husband holding extra or part-time jobs?

19. What financial aspects to you think are involved in entertaining guests in your home?

20. When we get into financial difficulties I will:

21. I have the following questions about finances:

4.2.1.7 Insight Questions⁷

⁷ *The Secret of Staying in Love*, John Powell, Argus Communications, Niles, Illinois.

Please complete the following sentences. From your answers you will gain new insight into your thoughts and feelings.

1. When I hear from others that you have complained about me I:

2. When some other interest seems more important to you than I do, I

: _____

3. When you seem to hold back something from me, I:

4. When I hold back something from you, I:

5. When you look at other men/women with obvious interest, I:

6. When you are late and I have to wait for you,

I: _____

7. When you have a strong interest which I cannot share, I:

8. When I try to convince you of something and you can't accept it, I:

9. When you seem to be rejecting my feelings, I:

10. When you praise or complement me, I:

11. When I am confronted with or think of that which I fear most, I:

12. When I think you are judging me, I:

13. When you become violently angry with me, I:

14. When I have to admit that I was wrong, I:

15. When I think you are taking a superior role in our dialogues and discussions, I:

16. When I do not seem able to reach you, I: _____

-
17. When you frown at me, I: _____
 18. When you are being too hard on yourself, I:

 19. When you smile at me, I:

 20. When you reach out and touch me, I:

 21. When I think of praying with you, I:

 22. When you make a sacrifice for me, I:

 23. When others notice our closeness, I:

 24. When we appear as a partnership, not as individuals only, I:

 25. When I reflect that you love me, I:

 26. When you seem annoyed with me, I:

 27. When I have the opportunity to be alone and enjoy some solitude, I:

 28. When we have been separated for a long time, I:

 29. When I reflect that we are growing in mutual knowledge, I:

 30. When we are holding hands, I:

 31. When we are making plans together, I:

 32. When I am buying you a gift, I:

 33. When I reach out and touch you, I:

34. When you interrupt me in conversation, I:

35. When we are in some form of competition like cards or an athletic contest, I:

36. When you say "no" to one of my requests, I:

37. When I think I have hurt your feelings, I:

38. When you apologize to me, I:

39. When we can spend a quiet evening together, I:

40. When you help me locate my feelings, I:

41. When I hear from others that you have "bragged" about me, I:

42. When others look at you with obvious interest, I:

43. When you cry, I:

44. When you are sick, I:

45. When I think about your death and what life will be without you, I:

46. When we hear "our song," I:

47. When you ask me to help you, I:

48. When I have to apologize to you, I:

49. When you surprise me with something nice, I:

50. When you seem to appreciate me, I:

51. When you laugh at my jokes, I:

52. When I think that you are not recognizing my needs, I:

53. When I make a mistake and you point it out, I:

54. When you are holding me in your arms, I:

55. When our routines are different and our interests separate us, I:

56. When I am late and you have to wait for me, I:

57. When I reach out and touch you, I:

58. When I think you don't believe me, I:

4.2.1.8 Religion

Most people want a church wedding rather than a civil ceremony. Have you every wondered why? What is so special about a church wedding? Sometimes the couple really want their marriage blessed of God while others want a church wedding simply because it is a tradition. How important are religious and spiritual values to a marriage relationship? Does the spiritual life of the couple affect their marriage? Do the vows of commitment made before God and friends really mean anything?

Answer the following questions and share with one another your religious and spiritual convictions:

1. My father's religious background is: _____

2. How religious is your father? Very Middle-of-the-road Not very Not at all

3. My mother's religious background is: _____

4. How religious is your mother? Very Middle-of-the-road Not very Not at all

5. My religious background is: _____

6. How important do you believe religious commitment are to your marriage?

7. Do you believe in God? Yes No Unsure

- 8. Do you pray? No Once in a while Very often
- 9. Do you read the Bible? No Occasionally Fairly regularly Regularly
- 10. Do you and your fiance read the Bible together? Yes No
If yes, how often do you read together? _____
- 11. Do you and your finance pray together? Yes No
If yes, how often do you pray together? _____
- 12. I attend the services of a church: Never Seldom Periodically Frequently Regularly
- 13. I attend: _____ church
Are you a member? Yes No
- 14. What do you think it means to receive Christ as your Savior and Lord?

- 15. Have you ever personally received Christ as your Savior and Lord? Yes No Unsure
If yes, where? _____
When? _____
- 16. What do you think it means to be a Spirit-filled Christian?

- 17. Do you consider yourself to be a Spirit-filled Christian? Yes No Don't know
- 18. My most significant spiritual experience was:

- 19. My definition of a Christian marriage is:

- 20. I want a church wedding because:

- 21. A Christian marriage is important to me because:

- 22. Do you believe that it is important for you and your family to go to church? Yes No
 Unsure

Explain: _____

23. We plan to go to _____ church after we are married.

24. My fiance and I have the following religious differences:

25. My fiance and I plan to work on our religious differences by:

26. To me, equality before God means:

27. I believe that spiritual leadership in the home is initiated by:

28. I think that the spiritual growth of my children is the responsibility of:

29. We are planning for the following type of family devotions:

30. What do you think the phrase "To marry in the Lord" means?

31. Read Ephesians 5:15-6:4; Colossians 3:21; I Timothy 5:8; I Peter 3:7, and make a list of the responsibilities of a Christian husband:

32. Read Ephesians 5:15-6:4; I Timothy 1:9-10, 3:11; I Peter 3:1-6, and make a list of the responsibilities of a Christian wife:

33. Read Ephesians 5:15-6:4; Colossians 3:21; I Timothy 5:8; I Peter 3:7 and make a list of the responsibilities of a Christian husband:

34. Read Ephesians 5:15-6:4; I Timothy 1:9-10, 3:11; I Peter 3:1-6, and make a list of the responsibilities of a Christian wife:

35. I think that Psalm 127:1 means:

36. To me the word submission in Ephesians 5:21-22 means:

37. Does only the wife submit? () Yes () No () Uncertain

38. I feel a husband can submit in marriage by:

39. After reading Genesis 2:24, I feel the phrase "one flesh "means:

40. Read Deuteronomy 24:1-4; Malachi 2:11-16; Matthew 5:31-32; 19:3-12; Mark 10:2-12; Luke 16:18; and I Corinthians 7:10-15. After reading the above scriptures, I feel God's attitude toward divorce is:

41. I have the following questions about spiritual matters:

4.2.2 Danger Signs: What to watch out for

Marriage is a very important decision. We need to be sure we are making the right choice of a marriage partner. Anthony Florio, a professional marriage counselor, lists the following danger signs to look for:

Like red lights, blinking, danger signs mean STOP, then proceed with caution (if at all!). It is better to take this brief test before you become engaged so that if definite danger signs turn up you will have time to do something about them before committing yourself officially to marriage plans. If you are already engaged and encounter danger signs, then by all means delay your wedding plans until you can straighten out the problem areas that you or your partner have. Like icebergs, the negative traits may be hidden from you, and just the tips show what is going on beneath a supposedly mature exterior.

1. *A general feeling about the relationship. Lack of inner peace.* A nagging, aching, disturbing inside that says, "Something is wrong." Don't ignore that feeling. It may be your own temporarily numbed common sense, or it may be God's Spirit trying to communicate something to you. More than a few clients have admitted to me that they knew the marriage was a mistake even as they were walking down the aisle.
2. *Frequent arguments.* Never sure how the date will end. More fighting than fun.
3. *Avoiding discussing sensitive subjects because you're afraid of hurting your partner's feelings* or starting an argument. You find yourself thinking, "I'd better not talk about this." Perhaps subjects like: "I wish he'd show me more affection, I wish he wouldn't treat his mother so mean. I wonder why he always has a temper tantrum when he gets a flat. Can't he control it better? I wish he would shower more often."
"She makes a pig of herself when there's a box of candy anywhere in sight--don't you suppose she cares about getting fat? I wish she'd read a book once in a while. Why can't we ever talk about something interesting instead of just superficial topics?"
4. *Getting more involved physically.* You resolve to limit the acceleration of your physical intimacy, but find that on each new date you start again at the place where you left off. Sometimes couples get involved physically as a way to avoid arguments. Just one of the reasons for this being a danger sign is that your relationship may remain on the physical level only, throughout your courtship and marriage. After you're married you may not like the personality that goes along with the body.
5. *If you find yourself always doing what your partner wants to do. Constantly giving in, being accommodating.* This could indicate a selfish, domineering partner and/or a serious insecurity on your part.
6. *If you detect serious emotional disturbances such as extreme fears, extreme shyness, bizarre behavior, irrational anger, inflicting physical injury, inability to demonstrate affection.*
7. *If you feel you are staying in the relationship through fear.* For example, if thoughts like these go through your mind: "I wish I could get out of dating him, but I'm afraid of what he might do to me. Or he might commit suicide. I feel trapped and I couldn't stand the guilt if something happened."
8. *If your partner is constantly complaining about apparently unreal aches and pains and going from doctor to doctor.*
9. *If your partner continually makes excuses for not finding a job. If he or she borrows money from you frequently. The partner who evades responsibility and who can't manage his money wisely will be a poor marriage risk.*
10. *If your partner is overly jealous, suspicious, questions your word all the time, feels that everyone is against him/her.*
11. *If the one you date is a perfectionist and is constantly critical. This kind of person often creates a tense unhealthy atmosphere.*
12. *Treats you contemptuously. Uses biting sarcasm.*
13. *Parents and other significant people are strongly against your marriage. Consider their reasons before you make a final decision.*
14. *Lack of spiritual harmony.*
15. *Few areas of common interest.*
16. *Inability to accept constructive criticism. Doesn't apologize when he/she is wrong.*

DANGER SIGNS THAT WOULD INDICATE THE NEED FOR PROFESSIONAL COUNSELING

1. Undue jealousy, suspicion, distrust.

2. Constant chip-on-the-shoulder attitude.
3. Temper tantrums.
4. Unresolved anger, resentment. Vindictiveness.
5. Physically abusive.
6. Objects to or is distant to any kind of romantic involvement.
7. Severe mood swings. High elation followed by depression.
8. Constantly negative attitude. Pessimistic.
9. Suspicious of everyone. Suspects some sort of plotting against him/her.
10. Speaks of suicide and the meaninglessness of life.⁸

4.2.3 Sample Wedding Ceremony²

Introduction by Minister

_____ (groom firstname) and _____ (bride firstname) , you are surrounded by your family and friends, all of whom are here to share in your joy on this special occasion. It will be one of the most memorable and happy days of your lives.

On this your wedding day, you stand apart from all others. You stand within the beautiful circle of your love. For this reason we are here in the presence of God, to join you both in holy matrimony. God has declared that marriage is an honorable and desirable condition. It was designed by God to bring joy, completion, and unity to man and woman. The basic biblical guidelines are that we should put God first, the welfare of our spouse second, and ourselves last within the marriage relationship. This is confirmed by the first commandment to love the Lord God with all our heart, soul, and mind and also by Phil. 2:3, which says:

“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.”

Minister speaks to both sets of parents

Would Mr. and Mrs. _____ and Mr. and Mrs. _____ please stand. It is traditional for the father of the bride to give her away. However, in a real sense, both sets of parents share in the giving and receiving. Therefore, Mr. and Mrs. _____, do you not only give your daughter _____ to be _____ husband, but also joyfully receive _____ as your son? (Response by bride's parents--"We do.") Mr. and Mrs. _____, do you not only joyfully give your son _____ to _____ as her husband, but receive _____ to be your daughter? (Response by groom's parents--"We do.")

Bride and Groom move to Altar

Minister proceeds

Marriage was instituted by God Himself when He said, "It is not good that man should be alone."

⁸ *Two To Get Ready*, Fleming H. Revell Company, 1974.

⁹ Adapted from *How Can I Be Sure?*, Bob Phillips, 1978, pp. 97-105, Harvest House Publishers, Eugene Oregon, ISBN 0-89081-073-7.

From the side of man God created woman to be his friend and companion...

- Not out of his head to rule over him.
- Not out of his feet to be trampled upon by him.
- But out of his side to be equal with him.
- And under his arm for protection.
- And near his heart to be loved.

God said, "for this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife, and they two shall be one flesh."

- One flesh in companionship
- One flesh in the control of the God given sexual drives
- One flesh in the propagation of children
- And one flesh in the testimony of the joy of a Christian marriage

The Bible's description of true love

The Bible tells us that true love is "slow to lose patience.. love is kind...love looks for a way of being constructive. Love is not possessive...love is neither anxious to impress nor does it cherish inflated ideas of its own importance.

"Love has good manners and does not pursue selfish advantage. Love is not touchy. Love does not keep account of evil or gloat over the wickedness of other people. On the contrary, love is glad with all good men when truth prevails.

*"Love knows no limit to its endurance, no end to its trust, no fading of its hope; love can outlast anything. Love is, in fact, the one thing that still stands when all else has fallen."
1 Corinthians 13.*

This couple acknowledges love as both a feeling and an action that is a product of a choice and a commitment, and they recognize the superiority of love the action over love the feeling. They believe that love the feeling results from love the action and the one is a consequence of and cannot exist without the other. This couple covenants to obey the Lord's command to demonstrate love the action continually towards each other regardless of how they may feel, and they make their feelings their personal responsibility to manage and control as evidence of their spiritual maturity and shared commitment to the Lord. They will do this because God is love. This is confirmed in the Bible, which says about love the action in 1 John 4:8:

"He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love."

This couple covenants this day to choose to be like God every day of their lives by choosing to always act in a loving way towards each other regardless of the circumstances that the Lord blesses them with.

Admonition of Scripture to husbands and wives

In the book of Ephesians, chapter five, marriage is likened to the mystical union of Christ and the church...

"You wives must submit to your husband's leadership in the same way you submit to the Lord. For a husband is in charge of his wife in the same way Christ is in charge of his

body the church. (He gave his very life to take care of it and be its savior!) So you wives must willingly obey your husbands in everything, just as the church obeys Christ.

The minister may possibly want to make personal comments to the Bride at this point

"And you husbands, show the same kind of love to your wives as Christ showed to the church when he died for her.

"That is how husbands should treat their wives, loving them as parts of themselves. For since a man and his wife are not one, a man is really doing himself a favor and loving himself when he loves his wife! No one hates his own body but lovingly cares for it, just as Christ cares for his body the church, of which we are parts.

The minister may possibly want to make personal comments to the Groom at this point

"So again I say, a man must love his wife as part of himself; and the wife must see to it that she deeply respects her husband..obeying..praising and honoring him and avoiding gossip and talking about confidential personal matters with others."

Vows spoken to the Minister

After hearing the admonition of Scripture, do you _____(groom) take _____(bride) to be your lawfully wedded wife? Do you promise to nurture her and love her for life? Do you solemnly pledge before God and these witnesses that you will be faithful to her for the remainder of your life? If so, answer I will (Response by the Groom)

_____ (bride) do you take _____(groom) to be your lawfully wedded husband? Do you promise to love, honor and obey him? Do you solemnly pledge before God and these witnesses that you will be his faithful wife until you are separated by death? If so, answer, I will. (Response from the bride)

Minister will have the Bride pass her flowers to the Maid of Honor...Bride and Groom will turn and face each other and will hold hands

Minister proceeds with personal vows

_____ (groom) please repeat after me: I love you _____(bride), and today in the presence of our families and friends, I pledge myself to you. I reaffirm my faith in Christ and dedicate our marriage to be Christ-centered. I promise before God to love you, to honor you and cherish you. As God enables me, I will provide for your needs and desires. _____(bride), I love youBe my wife.

_____ (bride) please repeat after me: _____(groom), I love you. I've longed for this day...to be able to say publicly to our families and friends, that you are truly a man of God. A man that is tender and sensitive in his love for others. I promise to make you an orderly home where there is peace for your soul and joy for your heart. My goal is to be a Godly woman and to help fulfill our goals and dreams. I will respect you as my husband and I am honored to become your wife.

Exchange rings

What symbols do you offer that you will faithfully fulfill these promises? (Minister will collect the rings)

May the circle of this ring typify your unending happiness and love, and may the triangle formed in its passing, to me, and to one another, signify that triune relationship with God who reigns above were all true marriages are made. (Minister will hand back the rings to be placed on the Bride's finger and then on the Groom's.)

Bride and Groom again turn toward each other and hold hands

Minister proceeds

Will you both please repeat after me: I give you this ring as a seal of my commitment and responsibility to you in the presence of these witnesses, in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Since _____(groom) and _____(bride) have consented together in these promises and have symbolized this by the giving and receiving of these rings, I now pronounce them husband and wife. Whom God has joined together, let no man and no government dare to separate.

Minister prays: Couple may be standing or kneeling. They may wish to light a Unity candle..after which they will again stand before the Minister and face each other, holding hands

Ceremony of the Unity Candle

The two outside candles of the center candelabra are lit to represent your lives in this moment. They are two distinct lights, each capable of going their separate ways. To bring bliss and happiness to your home, there must be the merging of these two lights into the unity of one light. This is what the Lord meant when He said:

"On this account a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife and the two shall be one flesh."

From now on your thoughts shall be for each other rather than for your individual selves. Your plans shall be mutual, your joys and sorrows shall be shared alike.

As you each take a candle and together light the center one you will not extinguish your own candle as is usually done. Instead, place the outside candles back in their original places still lit symbolizing your individual personalities that remain, yet lives that merge together as one.

As the center candle is lit, may the radiance of this one light be a testimony of your unity and your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Bride and Groom kiss

Minister proceeds

It is my pleasure now to introduce you for the first time Mr. and Mrs. _____.

4.2.4 A Poem for the Marriage Day

TODAY

Turn your ear to the sound of the music of living,
 Happy songs from the laughter of children at play;
 Hold my hand as we run through the sweet fragrant meadows.
 Making memories of what was today.

Seems like only yesterday we were grinning young babes:
 Fragile but immortal...
 Bringing laughter, pride, and smiles to our parents' faces...
 Filled with sweet youthful innocence and wonder....
 Fascinated by the simplest and silliest things, people, and places.

But somewhere along the way,
 On the long journey that connects our origins with today,
 The relentless march of time,
 Taught us that our days are numbered,
 And like a thief in the night,
 Stole our innocence and wonder.

And already we are starting the same phase of the same long journey,
 Over the same path that our parents once trod.
 Yes, life is truly a circle, with no beginning and no end,
 Repeating itself over and over again,
 And what seems like a new and interesting melody,
 Is but one more verse in the same familiar but happy song of life:
 A verse that begins with "I now pronounce you man and wife!"

And so we all have this rare moment to hold in our hand,
 And to touch as it slips through our fingers like sand.
 Yesterday is gone forever and tomorrow may never come,
 But we have this very special moment right here today,
 And today is the most we'll ever have,
 So before we let it slip away,
 There is something we just have to say...

We are so very happy to share this very precious moment,
 With so many very precious people who we have grown to know and to love.
 Thank you sincerely for being there to share in the many joys and
 the sorrows as we have sung the song of life together over
 the many years that we have all known each other.
 By your example and by your words, you have taught us, and continue to
 teach us the meaning of love and commitment.
 We look forward to sharing many more happy occasions with all of you
 in the years to come.

4.2.5 A Marriage Benediction

Family Constitution, version 1.30

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May your marriage bring you all the fulfillment a marriage should bring and may the Lord give you patience, tolerance, and understanding. May it be full of joy and laughter, as well as comfort and support. May you discover the true depth of love through loving one another.

Remember that every burden is easier to carry when you have the shoulders of two instead of one. When you are weary and discouraged, look to Jesus to refresh and strengthen you.

May you always need one another—not so much to fill your emptiness, as to help you to know your fullness. May you always need one another, but not out of weakness. Rejoice in and praise on another's uniqueness, for God is the Creator of both male and female and differences in personality.

Be faithful to one another in your thoughts and deeds and, above all, be faithful to Jesus. May you see the marriage bed as an altar of grace and pleasure. May you remember that each time you speak to one another you are talking to someone that God has claimed and told, "You are very special." View and treat your partner as one who was created in the image of God. Remember that you are not to hold your partner captive, but to give them freedom to become all that God wants them to be. May you then embrace and hold one another, but not encircle one another.

May God renew your minds so you look to draw out the best and the potential in one another. Look for things to praise, never take one another for granted, often say, "I love you," and take no notice of little faults. Affirm one another, defer to one another, and believe in your partner. If you have differences that push you apart, may both of you have good sense enough to take the first step back. May the words, "I'm sorry", "You're right," "Forgive me," and "I forgive you" be close at hand.

Thank you, Heavenly Father, for your presence here with us and for your blessing upon this marriage.

In Jesus' name

Amen

4.3 Purpose of Marriage

"The Christian view of marriage is not that it is primarily or essentially a binding legal and social contract. The Christian understands marriage as a covenant made under God and in the presence of fellow members of the Christian family. Such a pledge endures, not because of the force of law or the fear of its actions, but because an unconditional covenant has been made. A covenant more solemn, more binding, more permanent than any legal contract."¹⁰

"Marriage is a relationship between man and woman intended by God to be a monogamous relationship, intended to be a permanent bond in which many needs are satisfied—the need to love and be loved, the need for deep friendship, for sharing, for companionship, for sexual satisfaction, for children, the need to escape loneliness. Marriage ought to be a bond of love, reflecting the love Christ has for His people, a bond of sacrificial love where husband and wife have become one flesh, a unity."¹¹

Below is a list of the characteristics and purposes of marriage identified in the Bible:

¹⁰ *Cherishable: Love and Marriage*, David Augsburger, Herald Press, 1971, p. 16.

¹¹ *Why Get Married?*, Daniel Freeman, Theology News and Notes of Fuller Theological Seminary, 1973, p. 17.

Table 4-1: Purposes of Marriage

#	Purpose/characteristic	Description	Scripture(s)
1	Marriage is honorable among all	Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge.	Heb. 13:4
2	Marriage is to avoid loneliness	And the Lord God said, "It is not good that man should be alone: I will make him a helper comparable to him."	Gen. 2:18
3	Marriage for procreation	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 every other living thing that moves on the earth."	Gen. 1:28
4	Causes two to become "one flesh"	Therefore, a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.	Gen. 2:24
5	Be filled with the fruit of the spirit	And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.	Eph. 5:18-21
6	Should love each other	This is the Biblical description of love	1 Cor. 13
7	Should be godly and contented		1 Timothy 5:3-16; Heb. 13:5
8	Marriage to avoid sexual immorality	Nevertheless, because of sexual immorality, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband.	1 Cor. 7:2
9	Married people should practice mutual sexual submission	Let the husband render to his wife the affection due her, and likewise also the wife to her husband. The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. And likewise, the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. Do not deprive one another except with consent for a time, that you may give yourselves to fasting and prayer: and come together again so that Satan does not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.	1 Cor. 7:3-5
10	Marriage should be built on a firm foundation: God	Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock. But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew	Matt. 7:24-27

		and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall.	
11	Marriage should be based on the fruit of the spirit	But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.	Gal. 5: 22-23
12	Marriage is for people who lack sexual self-control	But I say to the unmarried and to the widows: it is good for them if they remain even as I am; but if they cannot exercise self-control, let them marry. For it is better to marry than to burn with passion.	1 Cor. 7:8-9

C.S. Lewis, a famous British philosopher, had some inspiring and insightful things to say about Christian Marriage in his book entitled *Mere Christianity*. Below is an excerpt from chapter 6 of his book entitled *Christian Marriage* which we agree with wholeheartedly:¹²

The Christian idea of marriage is based on Christ's words that a man and wife are to be regarded as a single organism—for that is what the words "one flesh" would be in modern English. And the Christians believe that when He said this He was not expressing a sentiment but stating a fact—just as one is stating a fact when one says that a lock and its key are one mechanism, or that a violin and a bow are one musical instrument. The inventor of the human machine was telling us that its two halves, the male and the female, were made to be combined together in pairs, not simply on the sexual level, but totally combined. The monstrosity of sexual intercourse outside marriage is that those who indulge in it are trying to isolate one kind of union (the sexual) from all the other kinds of union which were intended to go along with it and make up the total union. The Christian attitude does not mean that there is anything wrong about sexual pleasure, any more than about the pleasure of eating. It means that you must not isolate that pleasure and try to get it by itself, any more than you ought to try to get the pleasures of taste without swallowing and digesting, by chewing things and spitting them out again.

As a consequence, Christianity teaches that marriage is for life. There is, of course, a difference here between different Churches: some do not admit divorce at all; some allow it reluctantly in very special cases. It is a great pity that Christians should disagree about such a question; but for an ordinary layman the thing to notice is that Churches all agree with one another about marriage a great deal more than any of them agrees with the outside world. I mean, they all regard divorce as something like cutting up a living body, as a kind of surgical

¹² *Mere Christianity*, C.S. Lewis, 1952, pp. 95-103; Collier Books, New York.

operation. Some of them think the operation so violent that it cannot be done at all; others admit it as a desperate remedy in extreme cases. They are all agreed that it is more like having both your legs cut off than it is like dissolving a business partnership or even deserting a regiment. What they all disagree with is the modern view that it is a simple readjustment of partners, to be made whenever people feel they are no longer in love with one another, or when either of them falls in love with someone else.

Before we consider this modern view in its relation to chastity, we must not forget to consider it in relation to another virtue, namely justice. Justice, as I said before, includes the keeping of promises. Now everyone who has been married in a church has made a public, solemn promise to stick to his (or her) partner till death. The duty of keeping that promise has no special connection with sexual morality: it is in the same position as any other promise. If, as modern people are always telling us, the sexual impulse is just like all our other impulses, then it ought to be treated like all other impulses; and as their indulgence is controlled by our promises, so should its be. If, as I think, it is not like our other impulses, but is morbidly inflamed, then we should be especially careful not to let it lead us into dishonesty.

To this someone may reply that he regarded the promise made in church as a mere formality and never intended to keep it. Whom, then, was he trying to deceive when he made it? God? That was really very unwise. Himself? That was not very much wiser. The bride, or bridegroom, or the "in-laws"? That was treacherous. Most often, I think, the couple (or one of them) hoped to deceive the public. They wanted the respectability that is attached to marriage without intending to pay the price: that is, they were imposters, they cheated. If they are still contented cheats, I have nothing to say to them: who would urge the high and hard duty of chastity on the people who have not yet wished to be merely honest? If they have now come to their senses and want to be honest, their promise, already made, constrains them. And this, you will see, comes under the heading of justice, not that of chastity. If people do not believe in permanent marriage, it is perhaps better that they should live together unmarried than that they should make vows they do not mean to keep. It is true that by living together without marriage they will be guilty (in Christian eyes) of fornication. But one fault is not mended by adding another: unchastity is not improved by adding perjury.

The idea that "being in love" is the only reason for remaining married really leaves no room for marriage as a contract or a promise at all. If love is the whole thing, then the promise can add nothing; and if it adds nothing, then it should not be made. The curious thing is that lovers themselves, while they remain really in love, know this better than those who talk about love. As Chesterton pointed out, those who are in love have a natural inclination to bind themselves by promises. Love songs all over the world are full of vows of eternal constancy. The Christian law is not forcing upon the passion of love something which is foreign to that passion's own nature: it is demanding that lovers should take seriously something which their passion of itself impels them to do.

And, of course, the promise, made when I am in love and because I am in love, to be true to the beloved as long as I live, commits one to being true even if I cease to be in love. A promise must be about things that I can do, about actions: no one can promise to go on feeling in a certain way. He might as well promise never to have a headache or always to feel hungry. But what, it may be asked, is the use of keeping two people together if they are no longer in love? There are several sound, social reasons: to provide a home for their children, to protect the woman (who has probably sacrificed or damaged her own career by getting married) from being dropped whenever the man is tired of her. But there is also another reason of which I am very sure, though I find it a little hard to explain.

It is hard because so many people cannot be brought to realize that when B is better than C, A may be even better than B. They like thinking in terms of [dichotomies like] good and bad, not of good, better, and best, or bad, worse, and worst. They want to know whether you think patriotism a good thing: if you reply that it is, of course, far better than individual selfishness, but that it is inferior to universal charity and should always give way to universal charity when the two conflict, they think you are being evasive. They ask what you think of dueling. If you reply that it is far better to forgive a man than to fight a dual with him, but that even a dual might be better than a lifelong enmity which expresses itself in secret efforts to “do the man down,” they go away complaining that you would not give them a straight answer. I hope no one will make this mistake about what I am now going to say.

What we call “being in love” is a glorious state, and, in several ways, good for us. It helps to make us generous and courageous, it opens our eyes not only to the beauty of the beloved but to all beauty, and it subordinates (especially at first) our merely animal sexuality; in that sense, love is the great conqueror of lust. No one in his senses would deny that being in love is far better than either common sensuality or cold self-centeredness. But, as I said before, “the most dangerous thing you can do is to take any one impulse of our own nature and set it up as the thing you ought to follow at all costs.” Being in love is a good thing, but it is not the best thing. There are many things below it, but there are also things above it. You cannot make it the basis of a whole life. It is a noble feeling, but it is still a feeling. Now no feeling can be relied on to last in its full intensity, or even to last at all. Knowledge can last, principles can last, habits can last [and commitments can last]; but feelings come and go. And in fact, whatever people say the state called “being in love” usually does not last. If the old fairy-tale ending “they lived happily ever after” is taken to mean “they felt for the next fifty years exactly as they felt the day before they were married,” then it says what probably never has nor ever could be true, and would be highly undesirable if it were. Who could bear to live in that excitement for even five years? What would become of your work, your appetite, your sleep, your friendships? But, of course, ceasing to be “in love” need not mean ceasing to love. Love in this second sense—love as distinct from “being in love” is not merely a feeling. It is a deep unity, maintained by the will and deliberately strengthened by habit; reinforced by (in Christian marriages) the grace which both parents ask, and receive, from God. They can have this love for each other even at those moments when they do not

like each other; as you love yourself even when you do not like yourself. They can retain this love even when each would easily, if they allowed themselves, be “in love” with someone else. “Being in love” first moved them to promise fidelity: this quieter love enables them to keep the promise. **It is on this love that the engine of marriage is run: being in love was the explosion that started it.**

If you disagree with me, of course, you will say, “He knows nothing about it, he is not married.” You may quite possibly be right. But before you say that, make quite sure that you are judging me by what you really know from your own experience and from watching the lives of your friends, and not by ideas you have derived from novels and films. This is not so easy to do as people think. Our experience is coloured through and through by books and plays and the cinema, and it takes patience and skill to disentangle the things we have really learned from life for ourselves.

People get from books the idea that if you have married the right person you may expect to go on “being in love” for ever. As a result, when they find that they are not, they think this proves they have made a mistake and are entitled to a change—not realizing that, when they have changed, the glamor will presently go out of the new love just as it went out of the old one. In this department of life, as in every other, thrills come at the beginning and do not last. The sort of thrill a boy has at the first idea of flying will not go on when he has joined the R.A.F. [Royal Air Force] and is really learning to fly. The thrill you feel on first seeing some delightful place dies away when you really go to live there. Does this mean it would be better not to learn to fly and not to live in the beautiful place? By no means. In both cases, if you go through with it, the dying away of the first thrill will be compensated for by a quieter and more lasting kind of interest. What is more (and I can hardly find words to tell you how important I think this), it is just the people who are ready to submit to the loss of the thrill and settle down to the sober interest, who are then most likely to meet new thrills in some quite different direction. The man who has learned to fly and becomes a good pilot will suddenly discover music; the man who has settled down to live in the beauty spot will discover gardening.

This is, I think, one little part of what Christ meant by saying that a thing will not really live unless it first dies. It is simply no good trying to keep any thrill: that is the very worst thing you can do. Let the thrill go—let it die away—go on through that period of death into the quieter interest and happiness that follow—and you will find you are living a world of new thrills all the time. But if you decide to make thrills your regular diet and try to prolong them artificially, they will all get weaker and weaker, and fewer and fewer, and you will be a bored, disillusioned old man for the rest of your life. It is because so few people understand this that you find many middle-aged men and women maundering about their lost youth, at the very age when new horizons ought to be appearing and new doors opening all around them. It is much better fun to learn to swim than to go on endlessly (and hopelessly) trying to get back the feeling you had when you first went paddling as a small boy.

Another notion we get from novels and plays is that “falling in love” is something quite irresistible; something that just happens to one, like measles. And because they believe this, some married people throw up the sponge and give in when they find themselves attracted by a new acquaintance. But I am inclined to think that these irresistible passions are much rarer in real life than in books, at any rate when one is grown up. When we meet someone beautiful and clever and sympathetic, of course we ought, in one sense, to admire and love these good qualities. But is it not very largely in our own choice whether this love shall, or shall not, turn into what we call “being in love”? No doubt, if our minds are full of novels and plays and sentimental songs, and our bodies full of alcohol, we shall turn any love we feel into that kind of love: just as if you have a rut in your path all the rainwater will run into that rut, and if you wear blue spectacles everything you see will turn blue. But that will be our own fault.

Before leaving the question of divorce, I should like to distinguish two things which are very often confused. The Christian conception of marriage is one: the other is the quite different question—how far Christians, if they are voters or Member of Parliament, ought to try to force their views of marriage on the rest of the community by embodying them in the divorce laws. A great many people seem to think that if you are a Christian yourself you should try to make divorce difficult for every one. I do not think that. At least I know I should be very angry if the Mohammedans tried to prevent the rest of us from drinking wine. My own view is that the Churches should frankly recognize that the majority of the British people are not Christians and, therefore, cannot be expected to live Christian lives. There ought to be two distinct kinds of marriage: one governed by the State with rules enforced on all citizens, the other governed by the Church with rules enforced by her on her own members. The distinction ought to be quite sharp, so that a man knows which couples are married in a Christian sense and which are not.

So much for the Christian doctrine about the permanence of marriage. Something else, even more unpopular, remains to be dealt with. Christian wives promise to obey their husbands. In Christian marriage the man is said to be the “head.” Two questions obviously arise here. (1) Why should there be a head at all—why not equality? (2) Why should it be the man?

(1) The need for some head follows from the idea that marriage is permanent. Of course, as long as the husband and wife are agreed, no question of a head need arise; and we may hope that this will be the normal state of affairs in a Christian marriage. But when there is a real disagreement, what is to happen? Talk it over, of course; but I am assuming they have done that and still failed to reach agreement. What do they do next? They cannot decide by majority vote, for in a council of two there can be no majority. Surely, only one or the other of two things can happen: either they must separate and go their own ways or else one or other of them must have a casting vote. If marriage is permanent, one or other party must, in the last resort, have the power of deciding the family policy. **You cannot have a permanent**

association without a constitution. [HENCE THIS FAMILY CONSTITUTION!]

(2) *If there must be a head, why the man? Well, firstly, is there any very serious wish that it should be the woman? As I have said, I am not married myself, but as far as I can see, even a woman who wants to be the head of her own house does not usually admire the same state of things when she finds it going on next door. She is much more likely to say “Poor Mr. X! Why he allows that appalling woman to boss him about the way she does is more than I can imagine.” I do not think she is even very flattered if anyone mentions the fact of her own “headship.” There must be something unnatural about the rule of wives over husbands, because the wives themselves are half ashamed of it and despise the husbands whom they rule. But there is also another reason; and here I speak quite frankly as a bachelor, because it is a reason you can see from outside even better than from inside. The relations of the family to the outer world—what might be called its foreign policy—must depend, in the last resort, upon the man, because he always ought to be, and usually is, much more just to the outsiders. A woman is primarily fighting for her own children and husband against the rest of the world. Naturally, almost, in a sense, rightly, their claims override, for her, all other claims. She is the special trustee of their interests. The function of the husband is to see that this natural preference of hers is not given its head. He has the last word in order to protect other people from the intense family patriotism of the wife. If anyone doubts this, let me ask a simple question. If your dog has bitten the child next door, or if your child has hurt the dog next door, which would you sooner have to deal with, the master of that house or the mistress? Or, if you are a married woman, let me ask you this question. Much of you admire your husband, would you not say that his chief failing is his tendency not to stick up for his rights and yours against the neighbours as vigorously as you would like? A bit of an Appeaser?*

4.4 Role of Husbands

The Bible is the ultimate authority on the role of the husband. Below is a summary of the critical aspects of that role:

Table 4-2: Role of Husbands

#	Responsibility	Description	Scripture(s)
1	Is head of the wife	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.	Eph. 5:23-24
2	Love his wife	Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not	Eph. 5:25-29; Col. 3:19

#	Responsibility	Description	Scripture(s)
		having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish. So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church.	
3	Give honor to wife	Husbands, likewise, dwell with them with understanding, giving honor to the wife as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that our prayers may not be hindered.	1 Pet. 3:7
4	Praise his wife	Her children rise up and call her blessed. Her husband also, and he praises her.	Prov. 31:28
5	Should not commit adultery	Whoever commits adultery with a woman lacks understanding; he who does so destroys his own soul. Wounds and dishonor he will get, and his reproach will not be wiped away. For jealousy is a husband's fury; therefore he will not spare in the day of vengeance. He will accept no recompense, nor will he be appeased though you give many gifts.	Prov. 6:32-35; Prov. 7:1-27
6	Should avoid seductresses, harlots, adultery, and evil women	To keep you from the evil woman, from the flattering tongue of a seductress. Do not lust after her beauty in your heart, nor let her allure you with her eyelids. For by means of a harlot a man is reduced to a crust of bread; and an adulteress will prey upon his precious life. Can a man take fire to his bosom, and his clothes not be burned? Can one walk on hot coals, and his feet not be seared? So is he who goes in to his neighbor's wife; whoever touches her shall not be innocent.	Prov. 6:24-29

In Colossians 3:19, Paul tells the husband to love his wife (Eph. 5:25), while Peter tells the husband to dwell together with his wife (1 Pet. 3:7). The husband cannot live with his wife as Peter says unless he loves her in the way Paul means. The love that the husband is commanded to have for the wife is not primarily sexual or emotional (though both of those concepts are involved); it is a love that loves in spite of the response (or lack of it) in the one loved. It is the kind of love that God has for the world (John 3:16) and is the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22). A husband can only love his wife properly if he is a Christian and under the control of the Holy Spirit.

The two responsibilities the husband has in the family are to dwell with his wife according to knowledge and to render to his wife the honor that is due her because she is his wife. To “dwell together” with his wife means that the husband must take his wife into every aspect of his life. There are to be no areas of his life where there are signs that say, “Private, husband only—wife keep out.”

The husband is to perform his two duties for a spiritual purpose: “that your prayers not be hindered.” The man who is not taking his wife into every aspect of his life and rendering to her the honor that is due her because she is his wife cannot communicate with her in the way that God intended; hence, he cannot communicate with God either. To make sure that the channel of communication with God is

open, the husband must make sure that the channel of communication with his wife is open. Only in this way can he truly love his wife as God intended and manifest his headship properly.

4.4.1 How Can a Husband Be His Wife's Best Friend?¹³

Many people can be your friends, and some can be close friends. Outside of your personal relationship to Jesus Christ, your best friend should be your spouse. That takes time to develop.

A husband does not need a wife who acts like a sister, or a daughter, or (worse yet!) a mother—he needs a wife who becomes his *best friend!*

A wife does not need a father to overprotect her and treat her like his little girl; she also does not need a brother to compete with her or a son to take care of as a mother would. She needs a husband who will become her *best friend!*

Most men don't know where to begin, much less put any effort into it. Society expects women to have other woman as their best friends, yet rarely does the husband play that role. Husbands find it difficult to develop a close and intimate friendship with their wives because they don't understand their wives.

It takes a sensitive husband who cares about being a friend to his wife to become the friend that his wife really needs.

The Bible gives us two basic principles to the husband who wants to become his wife's best friend:

- Love your wife!
- Honor your wife!

The primary effect upon a wife's sense of worth is the attitude and response of her husband. If he loves and honors her the way the Bible teaches, then they will become best friends and both will have a positive, healthy self-image.

4.4.2 What Does "Love Your Wife" Mean?

Ephesians 5:25 says: "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her."

Verses 28-30 adds: "So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself; for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church, because we are members of His body.

Love means different things to different people. Intimate close friendships are built on expressions and acts of true love. What one person sees as love is not what the other person sees at all.

That is why husbands in particular have such a struggle in understanding. They do not respond to their wives with the kind of love they need, but more with the kind of love men want and understand. That

¹³ Good Marriages Take Time. Bad Marriages Take More Time, David and Carole Hocking, ISBN 0-939497-40-9, Promise Publishing Co., 1996, pp. 127-142.

is often sexual and physical. Wives need that also, but find it hard to accept when other factors are missing.

1. It means that, next to Jesus, she's number one in your life.

Nothing equals the impact of this one thing upon a wife. To become her best friend, the husband must make her a priority in his life. That means several things.

- (1) ***She comes before your parents!*** Ephesians 5:31 says: “For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh.”

If you learned that your wife and your mother were involved in car accidents at the same time in different parts of the city, to whom would you go first? Many husbands have answered such a question, “My mother,” without thinking of what implications that gives to their wives and their marriages. We all have heard stories of how wives are still attached to their mothers, but we have found that men often are more attached to their mothers. They feel, and rightly so, a debt of gratitude and responsibility to their mothers. But, when that becomes more important than their commitment to their wives, trouble is bound to occur!

Interestingly, God told the man to “leave his father and mother.” Though we expect the same application to the wife, it is never so stated in the scriptures. The implication is that husbands, not wives, have the basic problem of dependence upon parents.

- (2) ***She is never replaced by any other woman!*** If your wife is your number one priority, then no other woman takes her place. It's as simple as that!
- (3) ***She comes before your children!*** Do you love your wife more than your children? We often face that question whether we realize it or not. Who gets the attention? Who gets kissed first? With whom does the husband spend more time? Does he ever agree with the children instead of the wife? Do they conflict over what should be done or allowed? There are many situations that occur in the average family each week that test this commitment of the husband and his wife.

Proving that the wife is first should not be necessary, but one argument deals with the Bible's teaching about the submission and obedience of children to *both* father and mother. Prov. 1:8 says:

Hear, my son, your father's instruction, and do not forsake your mother's teaching.

2. It means that the husband will give to his wife as much as he would give to himself.

Loving your wife according to Ephesians 5:28-29 is like loving yourself. Verse 33 says, “...Let each individual among you also love his own wife even as himself...”

Many men are very selfish by ignoring the needs of their wives. One wife told us that she would like regular physical examinations by a doctor, but her husband tells her it really isn't necessary even though he has a regular checkup.

Loving your wife means that you care about her like you do yourself. Does she need attention? Have you looked at her wardrobe lately? Does she get some time to herself like you want? Have you helped her this past week?

3. It means you never resent her presence or opinions.

Husbands will not develop close, intimate friendships with their wives when they keep ignoring their opinions or resent their insights into people and situations. Colossians 3:19 tells husbands to “love your wives, and do not be embittered against them.” One sure way to put up a barrier in your relationship to your wife is to criticize her viewpoint and make her look or feel stupid in the presence of others.

4. It means you don't make her live in fear.

If you really love your wife and are her best friend, then you never give her a reason to be afraid of you, your judgments, or your actions.

First John 4:18 says:

There is no fear in love; but perfect [mature] love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfect in love.

How can spouses be best friends if there is fear? That's the opposite of trust which builds a good friendship. Abraham was called “the friend of God” (James 2:23) because he trusted God to fulfill His promises to him even when his circumstances seemed otherwise. Mutual trust is necessary to build a close friendship.

5. It means that you are sensitive to her needs.

First John 3:16-18 states:

We know love this, that he laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoever has the world's goods, and beholds his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him? Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth.

Love is known and seen by its concern for someone's needs. In order to build a close friendship with your wife, you must care about her needs. One way of doing this is asking her what she needs today and encouraging her to express those needs.

6. It means that you are willing to sacrifice your own interests in her behalf.

This is the heart of what it means to love your wife. And, loving her is essential to making her your best friend. First John 4:9-11 tells us of the sacrificial nature of God's love:

By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

God demonstrated His love to us when He sent His Son to die for our sin. What a sacrifice! Philippians 2:3-4 speaks about such unselfish, sacrificial love when it says:

Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind let each of you regard one another as more important than himself; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.

Husbands who want their wives to become their best friends must be concerned about their wives' interests rather than their own. Going shopping with your wife doesn't thrill most men, but those who do it discover that friendship with their wives increases. She responds when you get excited about being with her in something she really enjoys doing.

When a husband chooses to be with his wife doing nothing he enjoys rather than being with others doing what he does enjoy, that's sacrifice. Furthermore, it makes your wife desire your friendship. You become special to her when such commitment continues to be demonstrated to her.

4.4.3 What Does It Mean to "Honor Your Wife"?

We said earlier that two things are necessary to become best friends with your wife: love her and honor her. But how do you honor your wife? What does that mean?

1. *It means you understand her.*

First Peter 3:7 puts it this way:

You husbands likewise, live with your wives in an understanding way, as with a weaker vessel, since she is a woman; and grant her honor as a fellow-heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered.

A part of the "understanding way" involves listening to her and talking with her. Wives frequently share in counseling sessions how little their husbands listen or talk to them. How can your wife become your best friend if you never listen or talk to her?

It's easy to grow apart. You start assuming a lot of things and taking each other for granted. Honoring your wife means you want to understand her and are willing to listen and talk.

2. *It means you don't use your position or physical strength to dominate or suppress her.*

Peter refers to the wife as "a weaker vessel." Most wives (not all) are physically weaker than their husbands. This "physical edge" is never to be used by the husband against his wife. When he does, the friendship is hurt and the honor is missing.

Some husbands use the Bible's teaching about the wife's submission to her husband as a tool to manipulate and abuse their wives. The Bible warns husbands about this in 1 Peter 3:7, warning them that their prayer life will be totally ineffective if they do not honor their wives as "a weaker vessel."

3. *It means you relate to her as a spiritual partner in ministry for the Lord.*

When 1 Peter 3:7 said “grant her honor as a fellow-heir of the grace of life,” it was speaking of spiritual partnership. Close friendships among Christian husbands and wives often are hindered by the failure of the spouses to be spiritual partners.

Husbands must recognize the spiritual position of their wives—“fellow-heirs.” There is an equality among believers that must be understood between a Christian husband and wife. There needs to be mutual respect and a realization that in addition to being spouses, we are brothers and sisters in Christ.

4. It means you always speak well of her in the presence of others.

Becoming your wife’s best friend requires a certain defense and protection of her when she’s not around. What you say about her reveals the depth of your friendship.

A good husband never allows his wife to be criticized by others. He constantly defends her and speaks well of her in public as well as in private.

Prov. 31:28 says of the “excellent wife”: “Her children rise up and bless her; her husband also, and he praises her...”

5. It means you understand your need of her as a companion and friend.

Nothing so honors a wife as a husband’s desire for her intimate friendship. When she becomes convinced of that fact, they will easily become best friends.

Genesis 2:18 reveals that this was the basic purpose of marriage:

Then the Lord God said, ‘It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him.’

It was God who told Adam that he needed a “helper.” Husbands should recognize the source behind the instruction about needing a wife. God knows more about our needs than we do. When a wife senses that her husband really wants to be her best friend, she will be greatly honored.

6. It means that you see her as a great blessing to you—a gift from God.

Honoring your wife involves a proper attitude toward her. Is she a blessing to you? Do you see her as a special and wonderful gift from God to you? Prov. 12:4 says: “An excellent wife is the crown of her husband...” Prov. 18:22 adds: “He who finds a wife finds a good thing, and obtains favor from the Lord.”

Do you see your wife as “a good thing”? A man may destroy all hope of being his wife’s best friend simply because of his attitude toward her. He does not honor her, but constantly puts her down by simple neglect or active criticism. The wife becomes a “burden” instead of a “blessing.”

4.5 Role of Wives

The Bible is the ultimate authority on the role of the wife. Below is a summary of the critical aspects of that role:

Table 4-3: Role of Wives

#	Responsibility	Description	Scripture(s)
1	Is submissive to husband	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.	Eph. 5:22-25
2	Is a help-meet	And the Lord God said, "It is not good that man should be alone: I will make him a helper comparable to him."	Gen. 2:18
3	Respects her husband.		Eph 5:33
4	Must be wise, resourceful, and frugal		Prov. 31:10-31
5	Shall not depart from her husband	Now to the married I command, yet not I but the Lord: A wife is not to depart from her husband.	1 Cor. 7:10
6	Is a gentle and quiet person of the heart	Do not let your adornment be merely outward—arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on fine apparel— Rather let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God.	1 Peter 3:3-6
7	Is glorified by having long hair	But if a woman has long hair, it is a glory to her; for her hair is given her for a covering.	1 Cor. 11:15
8	Cares about pleasing her husband	There is a difference between a wife and a virgin. The unmarried woman cares about the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit. But she who is married cares about the things of the world—how she may please her husband.	1 Cor. 7:34
9	Is bound to her husband	A wife is bound by law as long as her husband lives; but if her husband dies, she is at liberty to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord.	1 Cor. 7:39
10	A gracious woman retains honor	A gracious woman retains honor.	Prov. 11:16
11	Excellent wife is a crown of her husband	An excellent wife is the crown of her husband, but she who causes shame is like rotteness in his bones.	Prov. 12:4
12	Do not be contentious	It is better to dwell in a corner of a housetop, than in a house shared with a contentious woman.	Prov. 25:24

You know, it's amazing how our society has changed in its perception of a woman and her role. And I don't mean that it has changed over the several thousand years since Proverbs 31 was written, but it seems to me that it began changing in about 1960. It seems to me, at least in my own life time, there was a portion of my life in which our society could at least understand and affirm the pattern of an excellent wife given in Proverbs 31. But since about 1960, our society has moved so far from these principles that it may seem almost ludicrous to imagine a contemporary fitting in to the mold of the standards given here in Proverbs 31.

What kind of a woman does our society honor? Who is the honored woman of today? Who is the prototype woman of the eighties? What is the modern super-woman like? If our society and our culture could design a woman, what would that woman be like?

Well let me see if I can't pull it together for you. She would work at a job, build her own career, demand and get equal pay with men. She would refuse to submit to her husband, demanding equality with him in everything. She would have an affair or two or three, a divorce or two or three, an abortion or two. She would definitely exercise her independence. She would make sure that she was imminently fulfilled herself. She would rely on her own resources. She would not want her husband or children to threaten her personal goals. She would have her own bank account. She would hire a maid or cleaning service. She would eat out at least 50 percent of the time with her family or without. She would make cold cereal and coffee the standard breakfast fare for the family and quick-frozen meals usual dinner fare, and she would certainly expect her husband to do half the housework. She would be tanned, coiffured, aerobicized, bulging with muscle. She would be shopping to keep up with the fashion trends and make sure she could compete in the attention getting contest. She would put her children in a day-care center, making sure that each one also had a TV in his or her room so that when they were home they wouldn't interrupt her routine. She would be opinionated. She would demand to be heard from and eager to fulfill all of her personal ambition. The world would applaud her and she wouldn't be able to stay married or happy and her kids would probably be into drugs. But she would be the woman of the eighties. And she is a million miles from the woman of God described in Proverbs 31.

Do you understand that the book of Proverbs is a collection of wisdom that fathers and mothers were to give to their children? Do you understand that it was common in a Jewish family for a father to teach his sons the truths of this book? And not only a father, but a mother for on several occasions it says, "*Not to forsake the instruction of your mother.*" This was basically the composite practical manual for living that Jewish parents taught their children.

Now one of the very most important things that children needed to learn was directed at the young boys. And that was how to select the right woman. In fact, earlier on in the book of Proverbs young men are warned against the wrong kind of woman, the adulteress who flatters with her lips, the adulteress who forsakes her own husband, breaks covenant and entertains a union with someone else, the adulteress whose lips drip honey but who brings about death and destruction, the smooth-tongued adulteress who hunts for the precious life to make him her prey. Proverbs warns against the noisy woman, the quarrelsome woman, the rebellious woman, the foolish woman. And the sons of Israel were to be warned to stay away from and avoid all such women.

In chapter 12 of Proverbs and verse 4 it says, "*An excellent wife is the crown of her husband but she who shames him is as rotten as in his bones.*" Find an excellent wife, stay away from anything less. And so the warnings have been given. In chapter 19 and verse 14 there comes a hopeful truth. It says, "*A prudent wife is from the Lord, a wise wife, a virtuous wife, a godly wife is a gift from God.*" So all the way through this marvelous book of wisdom there is instruction about what kind of woman to avoid and to pursue the excellent woman, the excellent wife who is a gift from God.

It's interesting to me that the final chapter of Proverbs is chapter 31, that all the instruction given sort of climaxes at this point. And what you have in chapter 31 is the final lesson from a parent to a child. In this case, from a mother to her son. Verse 1 tells us that these are the words of King Lemuel, he wrote them down, but they are the oracle which his mother taught him. Here we have an unknown

mother, we don't know anything about King Lemuel, this is the only time his name is ever mentioned. We don't know anything about his mother but here is a Jewish mother who taught her son how to pick a woman. And a lot of other very important things as well. And this is her wisdom given to him.

In verse 2, "*What, O my son? And what, O son of my womb? And what, O son of my vows?*" In other words, what do I say to you? How do I instruct you? What do I tell you? The first thing I tell you is don't get involved in sexual immorality, do not give your strength to women. That's what that means. Don't get involved in living in sexual misconduct.

Then on down to verse 7 and following even, down to verse 9, she says, "*Stay away from drunkenness, strong drink. Take care of hurting people. Defend those who can't defend themselves. Stand by the oppressed. Support the needy and deal justly with all people.*" And gives him a wide range of practical truth. But then she comes to the real issue on her heart which he passes on to us. "*Most of all, my son, find a good wife. With her you will spend your life, she will determine your earthly accomplishments and set the perimeters of your living and your influence. Find a good wife.*" And from verse 10 to 31 such a wife is described.

The woman described here is of priceless value. She has physical strength, mental strength, moral strength and spiritual strength. Above all she loves God deeply and reverently. She is characterized in this section six ways, and I'll point them out to you as we just look together at the Scripture...six ways. Her character as a wife, her devotion as a homemaker, her generosity as a neighbor, her influence as a teacher, her effectiveness as a mother and her excellence as a person...the sum of all of that makes the excellent wife. And I might add that this is no woman in particular but this is the woman that every woman should seek to emulate. She is rare, look at verse 10, an excellent wife...by the way, the word excellent in Hebrew means force, a woman of force, a woman of substance, a woman of strength would be another way to characterize her. It's excellent in the sense of her strength spiritually, morally, mentally, physically. She is a woman of substances. She is a woman who has made a dent in society. She is one who makes a difference. There's a force about her life. This kind of wife, he says, who can find? Very rare. Hard to find this kind of woman.

By the way, chapter 20 says in verse 6, "*Who can find a trustworthy man?*" I just want to put that in because I don't want you to think that this thing is out of balance. It's just as hard to find a trustworthy man at the level of God's standard of character. That was chapter 20 verse 6.

Typically men seek a wife for all the wrong reasons, all of them. Looks, accomplishment, style, success, money, education, all the wrong reasons. They should seek a woman for virtue, strength of character, spiritual excellence, internal godliness, those are the right reasons. This kind of woman is a woman of force. She makes a difference. She leaves a mark. And verse 10 says her worth is far above jewels. Some would translate that word rubies, some would translate it pearls, the Septuagint translates it precious stones. In other words, she is more valuable than all earthly things which are valuable. She is a rare fortune, a rare find, a woman of force.

What are her qualities, this rare woman? First of all, let's look at her character as a wife, verse 11. And without saying anything specifically about her it talks about her husband to start with. "*The heart of her husband trusts in her.*" Now obviously the first thing we note about her character as a wife is that she can be trusted. She is trustworthy. This is the kind of woman who allows her husband to do her work away from home, who allows her husband to go away for perhaps an extended time. And to do all of that in absolute confidence in her integrity and her discretion and her wisdom and her care for all of his interests. The implication here is that there's a substantial home to be cared for and

substantial resources of which she is a steward. But he trusts her. He trusts her. The heart of her husband trusts in her. She has proven to be trustworthy. She is virtuous to the point where he has no jealousy, he has no fear, he has no suspicion, he has no anxiety. He knows that his care is his concern, his comfort is her passion, his burdens are hers to relieve, his being at ease is her high priority and his house has become the home of his heart because he trusts in the one who leads that household, his wife. Integrity, discretion, wisdom, faithfulness, trustworthiness, that's what fills the husband of this woman so that he will have no lack of gain, no lack of gain.

In other words, she's not going to cause him to lose what he's working so hard to gain. She is a very careful steward of everything that he has. Let me tell you, this sees the woman in the role of the oikodespotes to use Paul's word used in 1 Timothy 5 and Titus 1, she's the ruler of the house. She manages the assets. She coordinates the activities. She is the steward of all of that which he has provided. And he has no lack of gain because of her stewardship, her management, her wisdom, her care. And that frees him to be everything that he can be in the pursuit of bread for that family and also freedom from anxiety because he knows whatever he brings in she cares for as treasure. Definitely she is in charge of domestic matters, using and accounting for the resources of the home so he is free to give himself to the work. She helps him to profit. She devotes herself to the care of his earnings. She is careful. She is wise. She is scrupulous. And he can leave home and never give it a thought. He can give his whole heart to that which compels him in his profession, his business, his work and know that all is cared for. Her character as a wife, she is totally trustworthy, she is a steward of everything that he provides for her. She is definitely on the receiving end of his provision and she cares for it as a precious treasure.

Personally, verse 12, she does him good and not evil. She does him good and not evil. She always does what's best for him. She pursues his best interests. She strengthens him. She builds him up. She encourages him. She sees it as her role to do good to this man. He is providing for her and for all those in her care in that home, children and household servants and workers if indeed this would include a farm. And he in providing all of that is worthy of her best. She does him good. She never takes things from him, not his money, his possessions, his resources, or his reputation. She never speaks evil of him so that those in the home would learn to distrust him because of her testimony of his absence of character. She does him good not evil. She does everything to build him up. And then it adds most interestingly this note, all the days of her life. Isn't that interesting? All the days of her life.

In other words, her love for him is based upon such high spiritual principles that it doesn't fluctuate with the circumstances of life. When you get married you no doubt have affirmed the vow that you will live together in sickness and in health, in joy and in sorrow, in plenty and in want. And that's a vow that this woman kept. Good times, bad times, weak times, strong times, sick times, well times, happy times, sad times, plentiful times, empty times, all times, all her life she did him good. Like Sarah in 1 Peter 3:6, she serves him as lord. She reveals her virtue by her consistent service on his behalf. Her love is so deep it has a purity and a power and a devotion that never ever changes. His comfort, his success, his reputation, his joy, his fulfillment, his blessing are her delight, utterly unselfish. To live for him is her constant happiness and she knows she'll reap the benefit. Never unkind, always submissive in the most gracious way.

And this is the essence of what Paul said when writing to Titus, Titus 2:4 when he said, "*Wives, love your husbands. Do them good all your life, manage properly that which is in your care so that they have no need of gain.*" The benefit to the husband is expressed in verse 23, "*Her husband is known in the gates when he sits among the elders of the land.*" You know what that means? He's risen to the

very top of the esteem of the people in the profession he has chosen in life because he is free to do so because of the dutiful wife. She creates a world for him in which he can be everything that God would want him to be. She's so faithful to the duties of her love that he is free to be all that he can be as a man. He is known in the gates. He is a well-known man. The implication there is that he is esteemed, he is honored, he is respected. And that is because she has provided freedom from the things which tie him down and bind him so that he can be everything...everything that he would desire to be. That's her character as a wife. Trustworthy, doing him good all the days of her life, seeing to it that her life is spent to see that he can be everything God would want him to be. That's an excellent woman.

The underlying virtue there is selflessness, that's the underlying virtue. She is consumed with him and offers herself in loving service to fulfill that desire.

Secondly, not only her character as a wife makes her excellent but her devotion as a homemaker. Now being a homemaker is not a popular thing today. I was reading this week Vivian Gornick who is a professor at the University of Illinois who said, quote: "*Being a housewife is an illegitimate profession.*" It's replaced prostitution, in her mind. Being a housewife is an illegitimate profession. Phyllis Schlafley said, "*The most cruel and damaging sexual harassment taking place today is the harassment by feminists and their federal government allies against the role of motherhood and the role of the dependent wife,*" end quote. But in God's economy being a homemaker is an exalted role.

The sphere of the woman's duty is the home. She is the ruler of the house, the *oikodespotes*, Titus 2:5. And as we start in to looking at this in verse 13 we will see the beauty of her role there unfold. Notice verse 13. First of all, "*She looks for wool and flax and works with her hands in delight. She expresses her ability with her crafts,*" in this case making clothing, blankets, perhaps even curtains to cover the open spaces in the home that let the air and the light in. She goes after wool. She looks for flax. The idea being she searches for the quality product. She brings home the wool, wool used for clothing that would be in the cold times. Flax used for linen which would be worn in warmer times and would be used for the specially beautiful clothing that they would wear at any season. She finds the best she can, brings it back with the purpose of using her hands to turn it into clothing. You see, her submission and her godliness, her virtue, her relation to her husband do not make her into a religious recluse, pretending to be spiritual when really being irresponsible. She is not defining laziness as spirituality. She is not shirking the duties of the home. In fact there's no place in this woman's life for self-indulgence. There's no place for laziness. There's no place for inactivity. She is full of energy. She is full of activity. She searches out the raw materials in order that she might work with her hands. It says she might work with her hands in delight.

And that's the key. You see, she loves the family and she loves her husband and it's the love of her heart that puts delight in her work. If she felt like the reason for her to live was to fulfill herself, everything she had to do for someone else she'd hate. But because she knows her reason to be is to give herself for the joy of those she loves, the delight of her heart becomes the delight of her hands. The Seriac version translates that her hands are active after the pleasure of her heart. No complaint. There's joy in the most menial task because the motive is love and the love motive inside pushes delight into the hands. Self-denial is clearly behind the scenes. She's not concerned about her own pleasure, she's concerned about the joy and delight of her family which gives her joy and delight because she is consumed with love for them, sacrificial. She makes their clothes and all they need and does so with joy.

Proverbs 31:14 says, "*She is like merchant ships, she brings her food from afar.*" She goes great distances to get food. And she didn't hop on the freeway, she walked. And she would walk in order to get the best food at the best price in order to introduce variety in to the family, something beyond the local fare which could be purchased in her own vicinity. She was obviously engaged in good planning and good management. She was a faithful steward of her husband's gain and she would go as far as she needed to go to get what she needed for her family. Not just to provide food but to provide the variety and the quality of food that would truly express the love and delight of her heart. She wasn't just slapping whatever she had down and throwing it in front of them. She was involved in the process of going as far as she had to go to get what she thought they would enjoy.

Proverbs 31:15 says, "*She rises also while it is still night and gives food to her household and portions to her maidens.*" Typically in the east a lamp is always burning in the house, a little terra cotta lamp with oil in it and a little wick floating in the oil. And, of course, the wick would only burn as long as the oil was there. Because most often they went to sleep when the sun went down, the oil would not last all night and it was always the wife's responsibility to get up sometime after midnight and put more oil in the lamp that the family might sleep. Typically, the woman would rise some time after midnight, put oil in the lamp, keep it lit and then begin to do the work that was required to feed the family that day. She had to grind the corn. She had to prepare all the day's meals. There were no fast food places. There was nowhere to go. You fed your family by the work of your hand and the sweat of your brow. It was hot in that part of the world for much of the year, still is, and the cool of the night was a wonderful time...the quiet of the night. But it was still a major sacrifice. So she would grind the corn and do whatever she needed to do in order that when the family awoke a few hours later there would be food for them all. That was her dedication, her commitment. Her household could enjoy the comfort while she made the sacrifice for their greater enjoyment. You see, she was much more concerned with the blessing and joy of the people she loved than with her own indulgence.

And then it says, and I love this thought, "*and portions to her maidens.*" The word "portions" is quite interesting. It probably means portions of work, not portions of food. Portions is tasks in the Septuagint. The word used is erga in Greek. It is translated labor in Exodus 5:14. So what she did was get up in the middle of the night and start her own work and the maidens who were servants in the household also got up and she apportioned to them their tasks so that everybody was busy getting ready for the family and the household. Wonderful, consumed with the needs of others, doing it with delight, she is every bit the manager of the household.

To depreciate the role of a homemaker is pretty foolish. The breadth of the role of homemaker is amazing. To be able to be an economist, a steward of funds and resources, to be able to analyze all the products available, to be strong enough and well-planned enough to make the right moves at the right time to acquire the right things, to be fully a wife to your husband and a tender and loving mother to all of your children, to apportion all the responsibilities to everybody who was a part of the labor force, that takes some woman. People say, "*Well, you know, women have administrative skills, why should they get locked up in a house?*" They don't understand. It can be the fullest and most wonderful expression of womanhood. To produce this kind of woman is a major task by God's grace, a tremendous privilege.

Proverbs 31:16 takes us even further into the enterprise woman. She considers a field and buys it, from her earnings she plants a vineyard. There's a field, perhaps adjacent to the property that the family owns. She feels it's at a right price and would be beneficial to the family. She buys it. There's a certain amount of independence in that. It doesn't say her husband bought it, she bought it. She

made the decision that it was wise. She pursued that option. You say, "Well, now wait a minute, she bought it and she also from her earnings bought it and planted a vineyard in it." That's right. "Well where did she get the money? Did she have a job on the side?" Look at verse 24. "She makes linen garments and sells them and supplies belts or girdles, cloth cummerbunds that were used to wrap up the robes worn by folks in those days and she sold them to the tradesmen." The word tradesmen literally is Canaanites...i.e. the Phoenicians, the sailors of the ancient world who carried the goods all around. She had a little cottage industry going. She made things with her hands, made a little money. She never let that extra money get into the operational cash flow, she kept it set apart and when she saw a judicious moment to purchase a field to the benefit of the family, she purchased it, planted the vineyard, she did that on her own. Wise steward, careful money manager, good analyst. This is some woman.

She makes wise investments to assist her husband. She labors in the home to help. She takes the money that she has earned on her own making those things and invests that in a long-term investment for the benefit of her family and her children and her grandchildren. She buys land and plants a vineyard. A wise woman.

Proverbs 31:17 says she girds herself with strength and makes her arms strong. The first statement, she girds herself with strength, expresses the energy or the force of this woman of force. It could be translated strength is wrapped around her, she's a strong woman, strongly disciplined, strong in terms of commitment to the family, strong in love to her husband. I mean, she's a strong woman. And then even her arms are strong, not because she goes to the gym. Her arms are strong because of the effort exerted in the daily tasks. Her strength is a result of effort. Her strength is a result of becoming a blessing to her family...totally selfless. This is what comes pouring through this passage, her humility, her selflessness, her love, the joy and delight of everything she does because she's lost in the love of her household.

And Proverbs 31:18 says she senses that her gain is good. In other words, when she gets the field and she plants the vineyard and the family prospers, she senses that it's good. In other words, as the Septuagint says she makes a good profit. She sees that it's good for the family. She sees that it's beneficial. It has welfare provision for them, it's for their well being. And so that motivates her. She's motivated by benefiting others. This is the woman of God's design. She is not motivated by self-fulfillment, self-esteem, self-glory, self-adulation. She is totally motivated by seeing others benefited. That's the godly woman. Spurred on, not by ego but by the fact that she sees what she does bringing good to others. So as a result, Proverbs 31:18 says, "*her lamp does not go out at night.*" She is so fulfilled in the benefit that's coming to others that it spurs her to work harder and harder and harder.

Hey, it's amazing what people will do to indulge themselves. It's also frightening what people will not do to benefit others. Her lamp goes not out at night, what does that mean? Because she is so pleased with the benefit of her work she finds work for the hours of darkness, motivated totally by the goodness and the benefit of the work. She is utterly unselfish. What a woman!

And Proverbs 31:19 says, in those nights perhaps when the lamp didn't go out, she stretches out her hands to the distaff and her hands grasp the spindle. Elements of spinning, the distaff and the spindle, turning the wool and the flax into thread. And then taking the thread and turning it into cloth. Then taking the cloth and cutting it into pattern, then sewing it into garments to clothe the family. Spinning the wool, spinning the flax, making the scarlet, making the linen, making the purple garments. Now all of it for someone else to be blessed and encouraged.

Proverbs 31:21 follows then, skipping over verse 20 for a moment, she's not afraid of the snow for her household. Did you know it snows in Jerusalem maybe three out of five years? It snows there. And even when it doesn't snow in the winter it can be very cold because it's so high. Read 2 Samuel 23 around verse 20, it talks about the snow. But she's planned for that. You know, they didn't have heaters in their homes. The way they heated a room was with a pan of hot coals. They would take that pan of hot coals and sit it on the floor. And then they would huddle together in the warmth of the blankets. But they needed not only warm blankets for sleep but warm garments because it was cold sometimes during the day, often that cold season could last a long time. But she had no fear for that. She wasn't afraid of the snow for her household. Look at this. "*For all her household are clothed with scarlet.*"

Why doesn't it say they were clothed with wool? Well we assume it was wool because that's the thing that would keep them warm. The scarlet is added to show you that this woman has a touch of class. Normally the wool wouldn't need to be colored or dyed but she dyed it. She dyed it deep red in color because that was the color of elegance, still is. Because it was beautiful, it was still dark and dark clothes tend to keep the heat in better. But it was scarlet because there was something more beautiful, more dignified in the warmth and the beauty of that color. So she made them not just functional but she made them lovely as well. And she planned far enough ahead so that she didn't worry at all when the cold came because everything was ready. Remarkable woman.

Proverbs 31:22 adds something. She makes coverings for herself. Now what that literally means is coverlets...pillows, mattresses, bedding. She made bedding. Now remember, she has to make all this. She adorned all their beds with comfort and beauty, providing for them the comfort that they would enjoy. And again, behind the scene is this love, this devotion, this unselfishness, this humility that is at the heart of the excellent wife. You say, "Yeah, but, I mean, this woman is up all night, this woman has taken trips all over the place to get stuff, she is working her head off, planting a vineyard. I mean, I'll bet she is a tacky looking gal. I mean, I'm sure she goes around in a terry- cloth bathrobe with threads hanging everywhere and coils in her hair. I mean, this is...this woman...I mean, you know, you can see her husband coming home and saying...Hey, you keep a nice house but do you ever look seedy, I mean, can't you do something about it?"

Not this woman. She's appreciative of the beauty with which God has adorned her. She's appreciative of the love of her husband and wants to show him how much she cares and how much she wants to present herself to him in the beauty that God has given her. So Proverbs 31:22 says her clothing are fine linen and purple. That's lovely. Not silk and gold and pearls and etc. Just linen, not particularly expensive, but the best because she went to find the best flax and did the best weaving she could do. And purple because the beauty of the color would enhance her own beauty. She takes care of herself. She adorns the beauty of her own creation. She avoids the extreme of ostentatious display and opts out for graceful simplicity. It's not overdone. She knows that a woman's true adornment, as Paul said in 1 Timothy and Peter in 1 Peter 3, a woman's true adornment is her purity, her chaste character, her virtue, her godliness, her inner beauty. She seeks to honor God, to honor her family, to honor her husband. And that does not preclude her own loveliness for that brings delight and joy to everyone. So she manages it all, for her family, even for herself and has enough time, Proverbs 31:24 says as we noted, to make some things to sell to bring a little extra in so that a field can be added to the estate, a vineyard planted and the family enriched. What a woman.

We skipped Proverbs 31:20 so let's go back and note the third thing about her, her generosity as a neighbor. Verse 20 says she extends her hand to the poor and she stretches out her hands to the needy.

Of course we would expect this, wouldn't we? This is an excellent woman. And as devoted and loving as she is toward her family, so loving is she toward those outside her family. She demonstrates not only a special devotion to her home but compassion on all those who don't have the privilege of being in her home or a home like her home...the poor, the unfortunate. And verse 20 says she extends her hand to the poor, we might assume that it means she touches them, she's personally involved, she's intimately involved. No doubt making clothes for them and making sure they're warm and fed. But we might assume when it says she extends her hand to the poor that she's responding to those poor who come to her, the next phrase says she stretches out her hands to the needy, which implies that she reaches out to touch the ones who don't come near her. She is touched and she is touching. She'll not just touch those who come close but she reaches out to those who stay away with the idea of feeding them and clothing them and enriching their life through her resources.

She is very much the model and the example for Dorcas who it says in Acts 9:36 was abounding with deeds of kindness and charity which she continually did. And you remember when she died the widows stood beside Peter weeping and showing all the tunics and garments Dorcas used to make while she was with them. She made all these clothes for poor people and widows and that's the godly virtuous woman. She stretches her hands to the needy. Her generosity as a neighbor. She is engulfed in her family but she's not myopic. That's not all she sees in the world. It's not overdone. It's not isolationism. She cares about others, too.

That brings us to the fourth description of her, her influence as a teacher which comes starting in Proverbs 31:25 and then in verse 26 and we start in verse 25 because teaching starts with character. Strength and dignity are her clothing. She is garmented by strength and dignity. And she smiles at the future. Strength has to do with spiritual character. Dignity has to do with class, quality. She is a woman of great character, strong, dignified. She has a grace about her. She has a confidence about her. She has a spirituality about her that really is the foundation of her teaching. You see, you don't teach in a vacuum, not in a home. I mean, you may be a teacher in a school and show up and say anything you want, but you won't do that and be believed to people who live in a house unless you live what you teach, right? So that teaching starts with a platform of character in a home or else you're teaching people to be hypocrites and you sure don't want to give that lesson. When you demand your family to be what you're not, you're telling them it's really not very important that they learn this, it's only important that they try to teach it to somebody else and pass on the legacy of hypocrisy. No, the teacher in the home is the woman who has gained the right to be heard and believed because strength and dignity are her clothing.

It says, "*And she smiles at the future.*" She has no fear or anxiety because she knows in whom she trusts. She's deeply spiritual. All things are in God's hands. She has prepared elegantly for everything. It will be well in the future for her because she's right with God. It will be well in the future for her household because all things are in order. It will be well in the future for her children because they are properly brought along in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. It will be well in the future for her husband for she has made provision in his case for him to be the best that he can be. It will be well in the eternity to come for all of them because of her life. She has made a spiritual impact.

And then the teaching in Proverbs 31:26, out of that character base she opens her mouth in wisdom. She guides her family daily in wisdom. I believe the father is to be a teacher in the home. I believe he is the family priest. But I do not believe for one moment that that precludes the reality that it is the mother who day in and day out, hour in and hour out is teaching wisdom to the children. Not formal

classes, but instruction in the flow of life, she's the teacher. Men, we may give the formal lessons but day in and day out she's the teacher.

And in what attitude does her teaching come? Proverbs 31:26, "*The wisdom of God comes out of her mouth and the law of kindness is on her tongue.*" The tora or the book of wisdom is her actions and her example to the children. The tora of loving kindness is on her tongue. The attitude in which she teaches all of this is a dominant attitude of loving kindness. What a challenge. What does that mean? Gracious speech, kind speech, tender speech, pleasing speech, compassionate speech, ministering grace to the hearers, as Paul said, edifying, building up. That which comes out of her mouth is the wisdom of God in tender and compassionate gracious kind words. What a teacher. The greatest teacher because the character of life makes her so believable, because the wisdom of God is true and because the attitude is compassionate and gracious...no teacher like that. What a portrait. Believe me, women, this is a challenge of a life time.

Fifthly, we note her blessedness as a mother or her effectiveness as a mother. In Proverbs 31:27 it sums up her leadership in the house by saying she looks well to the ways of her household. In other words, she exercises constant surveillance over it all. She manages the children well, all the resources well, all the household. She doesn't eat the bread of idleness. In other words, she is not eating the product of laziness, she's eating the product of effort. She worked hard at it..so hard that she didn't have time to gossip. She has the real satisfaction that come from a supreme effort. She surveys the household. She's got it all under control. She meets every need. And it implies that her children are in all of this because Proverbs 31:28 says, "Her children rise up and...what?...bless her." They reverence her. They honor her. They hold her in high esteem.

Let me give you something you need to know. The first half of your life, women, you make an investment, the dividends of which you will reap the second half. It flips over. This women would raise her children and when her children were old enough to be on their own, they would spend the rest of their life blessing the woman who gave her life to them. That's God's design. The compensation then for old age is the exhilarating blessed joy of the return of the investment of youth in children. The sad thing is that if you aren't this kind of honorable woman the first half of your life, then during the second half of life, you won't reap the rewards and life will be empty and unfulfilling. If you can't cut it and you either don't have children or don't follow God's plan as a wife and mother, then there probably won't be anybody around to care I during the second half of your life..you'll either be divorced or unhappily married and your kids won't call home because they are too selfish to. That's the tragedy. God has designed our life in passages and when we invest our life properly in those children God gives us, we will find the backside of our life will be the greatest sweetest time of blessing as they repay to us the blessing given. That's God's design.

As the children become older, they have their own children. And they seek to raise their children as they were raised. And therefore their mother is constantly before their eyes, her tender guidance, her wise counsel, her loving discipline, her holy example, her hard work, her unselfish giving. They never cease to fill the memories of her children who try to pass them on to their children.

And there's another dividend for her motherhood. Proverbs 31:28 says her husband also and he praises her. And he says, "*Many daughters have done nobly but you excel them all.*" There are many women of strength, women of force, women of character but, honey, you're the best. That's a woman's reward right from the mouth of the Lord. You invested in your children and they'll return it. You invested in your husband and he'll return it.

But how can a woman be like this? It almost seems idyllic to be such a wife and such a homemaker and such a neighbor and such a teacher and such a mother. How can a woman be like this? That brings us to the last point, her excellence as a person. It all starts with the spiritual dimension. Please notice Proverbs 31:30, "*Charm is deceitful.*" Do you know what charm means in the Hebrew? Bodily form. That's deceitful.. Some women spend all their time on their bodily form. That is deceitful because that's not the real you. Beauty is of no real value, it's vain, it's useless, it's empty. Form, deceitful. You think you're getting something you're not. Beauty has no real value. You want to know something? Those are the two things our world looks for. No wonder there relationships are empty and filled with deceit. That's all they look for. Fools, absolute fools. But here's the woman you want, a woman who fears the Lord, she shall be praised, give her the product of her hands and let her works praise her in the gates. What woman is this? She loves God. She's a true worshipper. She fears the Lord. You have to live with that all your life. You live with a woman who fears God, loves God and you are in the best environment. And by the way, she'll become more beautiful to you every passing year.

This is the woman of character. Only God can produce her. Matthew Henry said, "*Proverbs 31 is the mirror against which every Christian woman must stand and face herself.*" This is God's design. And only God can produce this woman. But this is the woman God wants. This is the woman who will be praised by her children and her husband. This is the woman who will be given the product of her hands, she'll get back everything she gave. And they will do for her for whom she did. This is the woman who is not only privately rewarded with the product of her hands by those she loves, but publicly rewarded as her works praise her in the gates. Listen, this is the woman that God wants and that every man should desire and that every woman should desire to be...one who is true to her mate, one who manages well her home, one who compassionately cares for the needy, one who lives and teaches divine wisdom with kindness, compassion and grace, one who fully fulfills the call of a mother so that her children bless her and one who though she seeks no praise will receive it anyway because of the character of her life.

I know we can't sell this woman to our society. I just pray we in the church can continue to focus on God's standard. It's a high standard but it's God's standard. And my prayer is that every woman who names the name of Christ will seek to be this kind of woman by God's grace. Let's pray together.

Father, I want to pray right now for all those who are wives and mothers, that, Lord God, You will give them the power of Your Spirit to move them toward this pattern, this design, this portrait of godliness. Also, Lord, may they know of Your forgiving grace for every failure in the process because the standard is so high. Thank You for the standard, thank You for the power in the Spirit who meet the standard, thank You for the grace of forgiveness for the failures. I would pray for every single wife and mother through death or divorce, struggling to be all that she should be without that man to give her guidance, that man for whom she can live and in whose love she is so fully rewarded. And I would pray even with thanksgiving for those women, Father, who have not been given children because that wasn't in Your plan, make their life fulfilled in their husband. I pray for those who have been called to singleness, may they serve You in that unique way which only the single can without having the cares of the house and the family and may they be fully rewarded in the bliss of knowing they're in Your will. I pray for the young girls as yet unmarried that You would make them the woman that You want them to be. For the young men selecting a wife, that they would seek to find the character that is exemplified here...not in fulfillment but as the goal and direction of the woman of their choice.

And, Lord, even as I think about all of this, this is a heavy burden for women to bear and all along I can't help but be thinking to myself who would I be to deserve such a woman? Lord, we fall so short. Not a man of us is worthy of such a woman. Such a woman in our lives would make us guilty. So, Lord, make us the men we ought to be. And then, Lord, I want to thank You this day for my own wife, who has for all the years of our marriage sought to be this kind of woman...who has poured her life into me and to her children, to others, to our home and who has become so much a part of what I am that I know no longer where she ends and I begin. I thank You for the gift that she is from You to me. And I pray that somehow, Lord, I might be to her what a husband must be, that she might be fulfilled. That I pray, Lord, for all that we might be all that You would have us to be for Your glory in Christ's name. Amen.

4.6 Mission/Vision Statement for the Marriage¹⁴

Vision can be described as seeing the invisible and making it visible. It's having a picture held in your mind of the way things could or should be in the days ahead.

Vision is also a portrait of conditions that don't yet exist. It's focusing on the future rather than getting bogged down by the past or present. Vision is the process of creating a better future with God's empowerment and direction.

Vision is specific, detailed, customized, sometimes time-specific, and measurable. Vision is a way of describing the activity and development of a marriage. The vision you have for your marriage may be different from any other person's. Having a vision for your marriage is having a realistic dream for what you, your spouse, and your marriage can become under God's direction. We need to seek what God wants for us and our marriage because, without His wisdom, what we achieve may be out of His will. We need His wisdom because, "*the Lord knows the thoughts of man; he knows that they are futile*" (Psalm 94:11).

Below is the mission statement for our marriage, which is based on everything we have learned about marriage up to this point. This vision statement applies individually to each of us *in addition to* the mission statement found in section 1.4: Family Mission Statement.

1. *We will show respect for each other.* We will show interest in one another when we first meet at the end of the day. We will give each other at least one compliment a day. We will listen to one another without interruption even when we don't agree with what the other is saying. We will give each other equal time to speak. We will first judge ourselves on each issue before we judge or criticize others.
2. *We will continually improve our sexual relationship.* We will read a book on sex aloud to each other and work toward making our sexual experience creative, satisfying, and exciting most of the time for both spouses. We will both communicate clearly to each other before 8:00 p.m. if we are interested in sex that evening. We will also be verbal before and during lovemaking. We will submit always to the sexual needs of our partner because we don't want to encourage them to commit adultery, which can cause divorce and dishonor God and our marriage covenant.
3. *We acknowledge that love is both a choice and a feeling. However, we take full and personal responsibility to always act and think in a loving way toward everyone and especially towards each other, regardless of whether we have love the feeling.* By doing love the act, we produce love

¹⁴ *Before You Say "I Do"*, H. Norman Wright and Wes Roberts, 1997, pp. 34-35.

the feeling. To be loving means to *choose* to act in a loving way regardless of how we choose to feel or how our partner affects the love that we feel. Our behavior and our feelings and the beliefs that produce those feelings are our choice and our responsibility, and not something that we allow to victimize us or the people around us. We refuse to act lovingly toward someone only when we get something we want back from them because that is selfish manipulation disguised as love. Our love for each other must be unconditional or it simply isn't love.

4. We will continually demonstrate our love, both verbally and non-verbally. We will both ask how we can help the other each day. We will say "I love you" to each other at least once a day. We will make love at least once a week as a way to validate the worth and attractiveness of our spouse. We will ask what the other wants to do on Friday and Saturday nights.
5. We will be flexible. We will learn to handle being a spontaneous guest for dinner, and spontaneously having guests for dinner. We will not obstruct our boycott our spouses' spontaneous plans and will go along with them to events as long as they don't violate our moral values or result in unreasonable expense.
6. We will demonstrate empathy towards our spouse. We will practice doing a task the way our partner does it at least once before we encourage them to do it our way. When we speak, we will consider how the other person might react to what we want to say before we say it and modify what we say to accomplish the desired result. We will work towards admitting when we're wrong, repenting, and not being defensive or hypercritical or reactive towards comments about our behavior made in love.
7. We will be frequently and continually affectionate with each other, even when our partner does not reciprocate. We acknowledge that being affectionate is the way that we show to each other that we accept and value our spouse. We will always initiate and respond positively to the affection that is offered to us by our spouse.
8. We won't live in the past and use blame or guilt for sins that have been repented for as a way to use guilt to continually control, oppress, manipulate, hurt, or discourage our spouse. When our spouse admits their sin and repents, then we promise to forgive them, never again be angry or resentful over the sin, and never bring up the sin again. We will also do our best to bear the fruit of true repentance as described in section 2.3.15 when we have sinned against our spouse or others.
9. We agree never to ask our mate to change to suit our needs, especially if it is a behavior or attitude that our mate had at the time we got married. The only exception to this rule is if the person is committing crimes or *serious sin* as defined in section 3.5.3: The Types of Sin and Correction or if the person is committing verbal or emotional or physical abuse against us or other family members. Any attempt to deviate from this requirement shall be interpreted as conditional, not unconditional love, which is not love at all, but is selfish manipulation disguised as love.
10. We will treat our relationship as entirely confidential outside of the immediate family. For instance, we will not talk about our sexual relationship with friends, coworkers, or other family members. We will not reveal the existence or outcome of any arguments we might have to third parties unless there is domestic violence or verbal abuse proved through admissible evidence other than the testimony of either spouse.
11. We will recognize, celebrate, and appreciate the uniqueness and individuality of our spouse. We will not compare our spouse to anyone else or try to make them feel inferior through comparison. Instead, we will complement and appreciate the gifts and strengths that God has uniquely endowed them with.
12. We will take the time to notice, complement, and reward behavior we like and which is good. This will incentivize family members to habitually do the right thing.
13. Divorce:

- 13.1. We acknowledge and agree that divorce is NOT an option and that our spousal relationship is permanent. Until death do us part. We will always act as communicate with the assumption that the relationship is permanent, and never project negative expectations, statements, or attitudes onto our spouse by expecting, suggesting, or threatening that divorce will ever happen. Because God hates divorce (Mal. 2:16), we won't anger or disrespect or disobey Him by allowing it to ever happen. Instead, we will be responsible for the vows we make (see section 2.3.16: Responsibility) and expect that they are not a product of emotion, but of will and unwavering commitment, towards God and especially towards each other.
- 13.2. Because the divorce rate in our culture is over 50% and because Christians are MORE, not LESS likely to get divorced than non-Christians (see section 9.1: Introduction), and because this is a Christian marriage, then we must unfortunately address the issue of what happens in the event of divorce. We therefore agree that if divorce ever happens, then we will identify the spouse who asked for it first in a written Divorce Declaration and we will both sign it before the divorce and provide a copy of it to our children when they reach the age of 18, so they can learn from our ignominious failures. The Divorce Declaration will document the reasons in writing for getting the divorce and defend those reasons from a Biblical perspective in order to preserve our integrity and to honor our vow before God. We will not use "irreconcilable differences", which is the biblically inadequate and anti-spiritual California state legal standard, as the foundation for divorce, but instead we will identify the specific sins from the list below and from section 8: Sin and Dysfunctional Behaviors of this document in the Divorce Declaration. We will identify the perpetrator who contributed to and caused the divorce, from our own perspective, and we will back up our claims with a polygraph test attached to the document which both spouses will undergo that asks about the truthfulness of our statements on the Divorce Declaration. The biblically sound reasons for divorce that we will identify in the Divorce Declaration shall be from the following all-inclusive list:
- 13.2.1. Spouse has died. For such a case, we don't need a divorce declaration statement.
- 13.2.2. Sexual immorality/adultery on the part of one or both spouses.
- 13.2.3. Refusal by a spouse to submit sexually to the other spouse. This causes or contributes adultery as described above and in Matt. 5:27-30.
- 13.2.4. Physical abuse.
- 13.2.5. Emotional abuse as defined in section 3.8 of this constitution. We will give specific reasons and evidence (tape recording and the testimony of witnesses) to prove the existence of the emotional abuse, how it happened, when we warned our spouse about it, when or why they refused to address it or repent for it, and why we couldn't forgive them for it. At the same time, we agree NOT to call emotionally abusive attempts to share the truth in love, because if we did, then we would just encourage an attitude of irresponsibility and fear about trying to honor God by following His commandments.
- 13.2.6. Gambling, drug addictions, or overuse of credit cards which endanger the health and financial wellbeing of the family.
- 13.2.7. Criminal tendencies that are federal offenses or cases where a spouse will be in jail for longer than two years, unless it is for unjust causes or causes that do not violate the standard of behavior in the Bible.
- 13.2.8. Abandoning one's home or spouse or abducting a child without the other spouse's consent for more than six months.
- 13.3. We agree and vow to God that the person who initiates or causes divorce to be initiated as indicated above will demonstrate their love by being honest with him or herself, with relatives, our children, and with everyone we communicate with about the divorce, by telling them that we disrespected God and committed blasphemy against Him by deliberately and

knowingly and defiantly disobeying His command (in Mark 10:2-9) to stay married and not honoring our sacred vows before and to Him. We acknowledge this kind of deceit and rebellion and lying to God is the highest dishonor we can do to the Lord and runs the risk of being unforgivable, since we knowingly refused to repent prior to obtaining the divorce and because we knew going into marriage what we were making a covenant to. This kind of blasphemy, it is agreed, will subject us to His judgment and wrath and will pass down very harmful sin from the fathers and mothers to succeeding generations that will be very difficult for our children and their children to overcome. We acknowledge that these kind of serious consequences passed to our children cannot be a product of our own unconditional love or unselfishness, because we would not divorce or do things if we love our children or stepchildren and wanted a stable and secure and respectful environment for them to grow up in.

13.4. We acknowledge and admit that it is usually selfishness, irresponsibility, and pride that is the reason why people get divorced (something Jesus identified as "hardness of heart" in Matt. 10:5). We vow before God and each other to take full and complete responsibility in writing in the Divorce Declaration for our deceit, our personal selfishness and immaturity, our blasphemy toward God and disrespect of our partner that caused the divorce that we initiated or caused to be initiated.

13.5. We promise not to divorce because of selfishness or because our emotional needs aren't being met, because:

13.5.1. The marriage covenant we made is an act of our will and our love for God and represents a promise to subordinate our emotions to that will and thereby honor God.

13.5.2. Husbands are called to love their wives as Christ loved the church (Eph. 5:25-29), which is also an act of unselfishness.

13.5.3. Wives are required to be submissive to their husbands and obey their husbands (Eph. 5:22-25). This is an act of unselfishness.

None of these behaviors can be characterized as selfishness nor can they cause or contribute to divorce. As a matter of fact, divorce is impossible if both spouses follow these three requirements the Lord has placed on marriage. Therefore, if divorce occurs then one or the other spouse must be guilty of violating God's word and we promise to document who and how that happened in our signed Divorce Declaration. Furthermore, our claims will be backed up by a polygraph test that asks questions about the truthfulness of all our collective claims on the declaration. In the event that there is a dispute between us about accountability over this issue, we agree to allow our pastor to have the final word on this issue and to make an entry about his findings on the Divorce Declaration. If we can't agree on a pastor, then we will agree on a professional mediator who will settle the issues.

4.7 Marriage Event Schedule

The following schedule of events shall apply during this relationship, subject to change by written consent of both parties.

Table 4-4: Marriage Event Schedule

<i>Event</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>When</i>
Anniversary	Annually	Marriage date
Valentine's Day	Annually	February 14
Wife's week	Annually	

<i>Event</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>When</i>
Husband's week	Annually	
Wife's nights	Weekly	Wednesday, Saturday,
Husbands nights	Weekly	Sunday, Tuesday
Both nights	Weekly	Friday

Definitions:

Wife's night: An evening where the wife dictates to the husband what happens romantically that night and husband must obey. This includes choosing the activities, the attire, or lack of attire, for the activities, and the duration. Husband must honor all requests by wife and may not choose any romantic activities unless wife explicitly grants him that right. Wife's nights are based on the content of Eph. 5:

Wife's week: A week during which wife chooses what to do activity-wise within the context of a vacation. Husband must honor all requests by wife. Cost of activities will be limited to no more than one week's pay for husband.

Husband's night: An evening where the wife dictates to the husband what happens romantically that night and wife must obey. This includes choosing the activities, the attire, or lack of attire, for the activities, and the duration. Wife must honor all requests by husband and may not choose any activities unless husband explicitly grants her that right.

Husband's week: A week during which husband chooses what to do activity-wise within the context of a vacation. Wife must honor all requests by husband. Cost of activities will be limited to no more than one week's pay for wife.

Both nights: Parties take turns doing what each other wants, and spend an equal amount of time submitting to each other.

Ground Rules For Wife's and Husband's Nights:

1. Activities can only involve husband and wife and no third parties.
2. Spouses may choose to not do anything during their respective night. This is perfectly acceptable.
3. Viewing of erotic pictures not involving exclusively the two parties is not permitted.
4. Taking of pictures or video tapes during the events is permitted. Parties agree to keep such items under lock and key and not provide to third parties.
5. Anal sex is not permitted.
6. Oral sex is permitted.

4.8 Crucial Components of Marriage

There are five crucial components of marriage. The following sections define and describe each of these components.

4.8.1 Common Spiritual Beliefs and Faith

The first and most important component of marriage is common spiritual beliefs. This means that as Christians, we need a Christ-centered home between two spouses that share the same religious faith and degree of spiritual commitment. The Bible says in 2 Cor. 6:14-16 that we as believers should likewise not marry unbelievers. There is a lot of wisdom behind this recommendation. How can spouses agree on approaches for disciplining their children if they don't even share the same God or church, for instance? Each religious faith has its own unique approach to moral and parenting issues, and parents need to agree on discipline or there is likely to be a lot of arguments between the parents over these issues that will not be healthy for the parents or the children and may cause irreconcilable differences later that lead to divorce. It is very stressful and difficult to respect someone who is dramatically different or even conflicting from your own beliefs, and mutual respect is the foundation of all healthy interpersonal relationships.

4.8.2 Shared Commitment¹⁵

Commitment is the second most important foundation of marriage. Without it, no marriage can survive. There are very few certainties that touch us all in this mortal existence, but one of the absolutes is that we will experience hardship and stress at some point. Nobody remains unscathed. Life will test each of us severely, if not during younger days, then through the events surrounding our final days. Jesus spoke of this inevitability when He said to His disciples, "In this world ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer I have overcome the world." (John 16:33).

Dr. Richard Selzer is a surgeon who has written two outstanding books about his beloved patients, *Mortal Lessons* and *Letters To A Young Doctor*. In the first of these texts he describes the experience of "horror" which invades one's life sooner or later. When we're young, he says, we seem to be shielded from it the way the body is protected against bacterial infection. Microscopic organisms are all around us, yet our bodies' defenses effectively hold them at bay...at least for a season. Likewise, we walk in and through the world each day as though surrounded by an impenetrable membrane of protection. We may even be unaware that distressing possibilities exist during the period of youthful good health. But then one day the membrane tears without warning, and horror seeps into our lives. Until that moment occurs, it was always someone else's misfortune...another tragedy...and not our own. The tearing of the membrane can be devastating, especially for those who do not know the "good cheer" that Jesus gives in times of tribulation.

All too commonly, marital relationships are shattered by new stresses that invaded the lives of a couple. Parents who produce a mentally retarded child, for example, often blame one another for the tragedy that confronted them. Instead of clinging to each other in love and reassurance, they added to their sorrows by attacking their partners. I do not condemn them for this human failing, but I do pity them for it. A basic ingredient was missing in their relationship which remained unrecognized until the membrane tore. That essential component is called ...*commitment*.

Dr. Francis Schaeffer spoke on this issue in 1977. He described the bridges that were built in Europe by the Romans in the first and second centuries A.D. They are still standing today, despite the unreinforced brick and mortar with which they were made. Why haven't they collapsed in this modern era of heavy trucks and equipment? They remain intact because they are used for nothing but foot traffic. If an eighteen-wheel semi were driven across the historic structures, they would crumble in a great cloud of dust and debris.

¹⁵ Portions from *Love for a Lifetime*, Dr. James Dobson, Multnomah Press, 1987, ISBN 0-88070-174-9, pp. 58-59.

Marriages that lack an iron-willed determination to hang together at all costs are like the fragile Roman bridges. They appear to be secure and may indeed remain upright..until they are put under heavy pressure. That's when the seams split and the foundation crumbles. It appears to me that the majority of young couples today, like some of those competing on "The Newlywed Game," are in that incredibly vulnerable position. Their relationships are constructed of unreinforced mud which will not withstand the weighty trials lying ahead. The determination to survive together is simply not there.

In stressing the importance of committed love, however, we should consider not only the great tragedies of life, but also the daily frustrations that wear and tear on a relationship. These minor irritants, when accumulated over time, may even be more threatening to a marriage than the catastrophic events that crash into our lives. And yes, Virginia, there are times in every good marriage when a husband and wife don't like each other very much. These are occasions when they feel as though they will never love their partners again. Emotions are like that. They flatten out occasionally like an automobile tire with a nail in the tread. Riding on the rim is a pretty bumpy experience for everyone on board.

At a fiftieth wedding anniversary, a man made an incredible statement to his guests. He said he and his wife had never had a serious fight or argument in the fifty years since they were married. That was either a lot of baloney or he and his wife had a very boring relationship. Maybe both were true. To the newly married couples reading this constitution, I must say: Don't count on having that kind of placid relationship. There *will* be times of conflict and disagreement. There *will* be periods of emotional blandness when you can generate nothing but a yawn for one another. That's life, as they say.

People contemplating marriage should ask themselves what they will do when unexpected tornadoes blow through their home, or when the doldrums leave their sails sagging and silent in the wind. Will they pack it in and go home to Mama? Will they pout and cry and seek ways to strike back? Or will their commitment hold them steady? These questions must be addressed *before* the marriage, before Satan has an opportunity to put his noose of discouragement around your neck. Set your jaw and clench your fists.

***“Nothing short of death must ever be permitted
to come between the two of you. Nothing!”***

This determined attitude is missing from so many marital relationships today. I read of a wedding ceremony in New York a few years ago where the bride and groom each pledged "to stay with you for as long as I shall love you." I doubt if their marriage lasted even to this time. The feeling of love is simply too ephemeral to hold a relationship together for very long. It comes and goes. One writer wrote:

Marriage is no fairy tale land of enchantment. But you can create an oasis of love in the midst of a harsh and uncaring world by grinding it out and sticking in there.

Another said:

Perfection doesn't exist. You have to approach the first few years of marriage with a learner's permit to work out your incompatibilities. It is a continual effort.

Those views don't sound particularly romantic, do they? But they do carry the wisdom of experience. Two people are not compatible simple because they love each other and are both professing Christians. many young couples assume that the sunshine and flowers that characterized their courtship will continue for the rest of their lives. No way, Jose. It is naïve to expect two unique and strong-willed individuals to mesh together like a couple of machines. Even gears made to work together have multiple cogs with rough edges to be honed before they will work in concert.

That honing process usually occurs in the first year or two of marriage. The foundation for all that is to follow is laid in those critical months. What often occurs at this time is a dramatic struggle for power in the relationship. Who will lead? Who will follow? Who will determine how the money is spent? Who will get his or her way in times of disagreement? Everything is up for grabs in the beginning, and the way these early decisions are made will set the stage for the future.

Therein lies the danger. Abraham Lincoln said "A house divided against itself cannot stand." If both partners come into the relationship prepared for battle in those first two years, the foundation will begin to crumble.

The apostle Paul gave us the divine perspective on human relationships—not only in marriage but in every dimension of life. He wrote, "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves" (Philippians 2:3). That one verse contains more wisdom than most marriage manuals combined. If heeded, it could virtually eliminate divorce from the catalog of human experience.

Below is a poem on why commitment is something our children want us to demonstrate and model for them:

Grandpa Tell Me 'Bout the Good Old Days

Grandpa, tell me 'bout the good old days.
Sometimes it feels like this world's gone crazy.
Grandpa, take me back yesterday.
When the line between right and wrong didn't seem so
hazy.

Did lovers really fall in love to stay,
Stand beside each other come what may?
A promise really something they kept,
Not just something they would say?

Did families really bow their heads to pray?
Daddies never go away?
Grandpa, tell me 'bout the good old days.

Grandpa, everything is changing fast.
 We call it progress, but I just don't know.
 And Grandpa, wander back into the past,
 Then paint me a picture of long ago.

Did lovers really fall in love to stay,
 Stand beside each other come what may?
 A promise really something people kept,
 Not just something they would say and forget?

Did families really bow their heads to pray?
 Daddies really never go away?
 Grandpa, tell me 'bout the good old days.
 Grandpa, tell me 'bout the good old days.¹⁶

What happens when the commitment between the spouses isn't shared or isn't equal? Let's explore this because it is a very common problem in many marriages today. We will begin by saying that adult romantic relationships continue to bear many of the characteristics of adolescent sexuality. We differ from the young only in degree, and will always reflect the rudiments of earlier sexual attitudes and values. Thus, grownups still love the thrill of the chase, the lure of the unattainable, the excitement of the new and the boredom with the old. Someone wrote, "Men love women in proportion to their strangeness to them." It is true. In committed love, of course, these immature impulses are controlled and minimized, but they exist nonetheless, especially in males. Furthermore, the desire for "breathing room" that was so typical during adolescence will be a lifelong characteristic, as will be the need to feel fortunate to have "captured" the one we married.

Conversely, in marriage where the mystery and dignity have not been preserved in the relationship, or where one partner clings to the other in desperation, the couple is faced with a serious "balance of payments" deficit. All the emotional energy flows in one direction, which is certain to deplete reserves and resources. This is precisely what happens when an insecure spouse begins to smother the other. Even if infidelity and abandonment are never threatened, the pleading by one partner for the affection and attention of the other serves to short-circuit the electrical attraction between them. Once the process beings that says, "I own you?" the game is over. The home team loses.

Human freedom is a precious thing and we react decisively against those who would restrict it or take it from us. Not even a lover can deprive us of that God-given freedom *unless we surrender it voluntarily*. In fact, not even God will attempt to take it. If you ever come to Him in a love relationship, I guarantee that it will be of your own choice and through no coercion on His part. Not only must love be tough--it must be *free*, as well!

¹⁶ "Grandpa, Tell Me 'Bout the Good Old Days," sung by Wynonna and Naomi Judd, Hal Leonard Publishers. All rights reserved.

Country singer Tom T. Hall wrote a song in which he revealed surprising insight into this aspect of male-female relationships. He said, "If you hold love too loosely then it flies away; if you hold love too tightly, it'll die. It's one of the mysteries of life."¹⁷ Hall's observation is accurate. If the commitment between a man and woman is given insufficient or unequal importance in their lives, it will wither like a plant without water. The whole world knows that much. But fewer lovers seem to realize that extreme dependency can be just as deadly to a family. It has been said that:

"The person who needs the other least will always be in control of the relationship."

I believe that to be true.

4.8.3 Love

Love is the third important aspect of a stable and happy marriage. The best description of love is found in 1 Corinthians 13:1-8:

1 Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become a sounding brass or a clanging cymbal.

2 And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.

3 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.

4. Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; 5 does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; 6 does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in truth; 7 bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

8 Love never fails. But whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away.

The Bible makes it very clear in 1 John 4:8 that our religion is vain if we don't demonstrate love towards other people: "*He who does not love does not know God, for God is love.*"

Many people have a confused view of love, and much of this confusion comes from the secular media we are exposed to. They confuse love the feeling with love the action. In Matt. 5:43-48, Jesus commands us to love everyone (love as an action) as ourselves. **By acting in a loving way, we produce love the feeling.** Certainly, everyone wants to *feel* loved. But the Golden Rule Jesus revealed in Matt. 7:12 says that

¹⁷ "It's One Of the Mysteries of Life." Written by Tom T. Hall. Published by Hallnote Music. Copyright 1977. All rights reserved.

“Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.”

What Jesus is saying here is that, for instance, if we want to *feel* loved, then we should *act* in a loving way toward everyone regardless of the response we get from our spouse or our children or our friends or coworkers or neighbors. If we don’t feel loved, the first thing we should be doing is examine ourselves to ensure that we are acting in a loving way, because ultimately, we will reap what we sow: *“Even as I have seen, they that plow iniquity, and sow wickedness, reap the same.”* (Job 4:8). This is the foundation of sacrificial, unconditional love and of every enduring interpersonal relationship.

Love involves empathy and seeing things from the other person’s perspective before we make a decision to act in any circumstance. When we love someone, we first consider what they would want or expect out of us and what is best for them in spite of what they want, and then do our best to unselfishly try to provide what is best for them as a way to show that we care about them and their unique needs and desires. This is our way to show personal interest in their happiness and welfare, which will ultimately produce love the feeling, which is one of many fruits of the Holy Spirit.

“When we make deposits of unconditional love into other people’s bank accounts, when we live the primary laws of love, we encourage others to live the primary laws of life. In other words, when we truly love others without condition, without strings, we help them feel secure and safe and validated and affirmed in their essential worth, identity, and integrity. Their natural growth process is encouraged. We make it easier for them to live the laws of life—cooperation, contribution, self-discipline, integrity—and to discover and live true to the highest and best within them. We give them the freedom to act on limitations. This does not mean we become permissive or soft. That itself is a massive withdrawal from the emotional bank account. We counsel, we plead, we set limits and consequences. But we love, regardless.

“When we violate the primary laws of love—when we attach strings and conditions to that gift—we actually encourage others to violate the primary laws of life. We put them in a reactive, defensive position where they feel they have to prove “I matter as a person, independent of you.”

“In reality, they aren’t independent. They are counter-dependent, which is another form of dependency and is at the lowest end of the Maturity Continuum. They become reactive, almost enemy-centered, more concerned about defending their “rights” and producing evidence of their individuality than they are about proactively listening to and honoring their own inner imperatives.

“Rebellion is a knot of the heart, not of the mind. The key is to make deposits to the emotional bank account—constant deposits of unconditional love.”¹⁸

A good way to demonstrate our love for one another is using the Language of Love, which is an idea originated by Gary Smalley (see http://www.christianity.com/CC_Content_Page/0.,PTID53147/CHID176346/CIID.00.html). Below is a summary of this concept, which relies on what he calls “Emotional Word Pictures” and significant emotional events to trigger the loving response that we want in our partner:

1. People (adults) learn mainly through significant emotional, rather than intellectual, events. These significant emotional events translate to strong feelings.

¹⁸ *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, Stephen R. Covey, 1989, Fireside, pp. 199-200.

2. Women are different from men in this regard:
 - 2.1. Women are mostly right brain while men are mostly left-brain.
 - 2.2. Women are often emotional while men are rational and pragmatic.
 - 2.3. Women become a part of their environment easily. Men, on the other hand, dissociate themselves from their environment and become detached and disinterested easily. They instead focus on concepts and processes.
 - 2.4. Women verbalize things a lot more than men. Men are more action than talk oriented.
3. A good technique is to use emotional word pictures to connect emotions with facts to increase retention or awareness of the facts of the situation:
 - 3.1. Anyone can do it.
 - 3.2. Requires the use of:
 - 3.2.1. Intimacy
 - 3.2.2. Praise
 - 3.2.3. Correction
 - 3.2.4. Clarification
4. Some of the greatest poets use emotional word pictures. Solomon is an example in his book of Proverbs and Song of Solomon in the Bible. We have six (6) resources or wells from which to draw our word pictures:
 - 4.1. Memories. They bring back emotions and feelings.
 - 4.2. Feelings. They bring back more memories.
 - 4.3. Revisit old places or relive past events to bring back original feelings and memories.
 - 4.4. Music. Old songs or films can bring back emotions and memories.
 - 4.5. Films. Old films bring back emotions and memories.
 - 4.6. Pictures. Old photographs often bring back fond memories and emotions, which then bring back feelings. That is often why families keep photo albums.
5. We leave a legacy of our words, whether we realize it or not. Try to paint a vivid picture with our words that will stand the test of time and create positive feelings in our spouses and family members.

4.8.4 Communication¹⁹

The fourth important foundation of a healthy marriage is *communication*. In John 1:1, the Bible says about communication:

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”

Therefore, knowing and loving God is to know and love his Word and the things He has to say to us and about us in the owner’s manual for our life that He gave us: The Bible. *To know and to love God is to know and love communication and to be a good communicator, and to seek out the communication he wants to have with us in His Bible and in his spirit.*

Likewise, communication is also the essence of relationships. It is the glue that holds relationships together and it is the ONLY way for a couple to become “one flesh” as described in the Bible in Gen. 2:24. However, there are significant differences in the way that men and women communicate. Women enjoy communication *much* more than men. Scientific studies have been done comparing the

¹⁹ *Before You Say “I Do”*, H. Norman Wright and Wes Roberts, 1997, pp. 56-57.

number of words that women and men use in a day and the result was that women use about 3.5 times as many words in a given day as men. Another way of saying this is that they have a daily word quota of 10,000 words whereas men's quota is only 3,000. To illustrate, consider the following (humorous!) discussion about haircuts:

Women's version:

Woman2: Oh! You got a haircut! That's so cute!

Woman1: Do you think so? I wasn't sure when she gave me the mirror. I mean, you don't think it's too fluffy looking?

Woman2: Oh God no! No, it's perfect. I'd love to get my hair cut like that, but I think my face is too wide. I'm pretty much stuck with this stuff I think.

Woman1: Are you serious? I think your face is adorable. And you could easily get one of those layer cuts - that would look so cute I think. I was actually going to do that except that I was afraid it would accent my long neck.

Woman2: Oh - that's funny! I would love to have your neck! Anything to take attention away from this two-by-four I have for a shoulder line.

Woman1: Are you kidding? I know girls that would love to have your shoulders. Everything drapes so well on you. I mean, look at my arms -see how short they are? If I had your shoulders I could get clothes to fit me so much easier.

Men's version:

Man2: Haircut?

Man1: Yeah.

The Bible also talks about how good communication can bring many blessings:

Prov. 10:11: *"The mouth of the righteous is a fountain of life.."*

Prov. 10:20: *"The tongue of the righteous is as choice silver..."*

Prov. 12:18: *"...the Tongue of the wise brings healing."*

Prov. 15:4: *"A soothing tongue is a tree of life."*

Prov. 16:21: *"...Sweetness of speech increases persuasiveness."*

Communication consists of three components: the actual content, the tone of voice, and the nonverbal communication. With changes in the tone of voice or in the nonverbal component, it is possible to

express many different messages using the same word, statement, or question. Nonverbal communication includes facial expression, body posture, and actions. An example of nonverbal communication which should be avoided is holding a book in front of one's face while talking.

The three components of communication must be complementary and consistent to be believable. One researcher has suggested the following breakdown of the importance of the three components.²⁰ The percentages indicate how much of the message is sent through each one.

- **Content: 7%**
- **Tone: 38%**
- **Nonverbal: 55%**

Confusing messages are often sent because the three components contradict each other.

Our nonverbal communication and tone of voice are essential elements in conveying our messages. If you are not aware of your tone of voice, you may want to use a tape recorder to record some of your conversations. Then play them back and pay attention to your tone of voice and what it implies.

In his book *Why Am I Afraid to Tell You Who I Am?* John Powell states that we communicate on five different levels, from shallow clichés to deep personal sharing. Hang-ups, such as fear, apathy, or a poor self-image keep us at the shallow level. If we can be freed from our restrictions, we can move to the deeper, more meaningful level.

The five levels of communication are:

Level Five: Cliché Conversation. This type of talk is very safe. We use phrases such as “How are you?” “How’s the dog?” “Where have you been?” “I like your dress.” In this type of conversation there is no personal sharing. Each person remains safely behind his defenses.

Level Four: Reporting the Facts About Others. In this kind of conversation we are content to tell others what someone else has said, but we offer no personal information on these facts. We report the facts like the six o’clock news. We share gossip and little narrations, but we do not commit ourselves as to how we feel about them.

Level Three: Ideas and Judgments. Real communication begins to unfold here. The person is willing to step out of his solitary confinement and risk telling some of his ideas and decisions. He is still cautious. If he senses that what he is saying is not being accepted, he will retreat.

Level Two: Feelings or Emotions. At this level the person shares how he feels about facts, ideas, and judgments. His feelings underneath these areas are revealed. For a person to really share himself with another individual he must move to the level of sharing his feelings.

Level One: Complete Emotional and Personal Communication. All deep relationships must be based on absolute openness and honesty. This may be difficult to achieve because it involves risk—the risk of being rejected. But it is vital if relationships are to grow. There will be times when this type of communication is not as complete as it could be.

²⁰ *Silent Messages*. Albert Metowbian, 1971, pp. 42-44, Wadsworth Publishing Company.

Persons who communicate primarily on a cognitive or thinking level deal mainly with factual data. They like to talk about such topics as sports, the stock market, money, houses, jobs, etc., keeping the subject of conversation out of the emotional area. Usually they are quite uncomfortable dealing with issues that elicit feelings, especially unpleasant feelings such as anger. Consequently they avoid talking about subjects that involve love, fear, and anger. These persons have difficulty, then, being warm and supportive of their spouses.

Others communicate more on the feeling level. They tire easily of purely factual data and feel a need to share feelings especially with their spouses. They feel that the atmosphere between husband and wife must be as free as possible from unpleasant feelings like tension, anger, and resentment. So, of course, they want to talk about these emotional things, resolve conflicts with their spouses, clear the air, and keep things pleasant between them.

Of course no one is completely cognitive or completely emotional. Where are you with your wife or fiancé? On the diagram below indicate (1) where you think you are, (2) where you think your wife or fiancé is, and (3) where you think your wife or fiancé would place you.

HIM: Cognitive (left-brain).....Emotional (right-brain)

HER: Cognitive (left-brain).....Emotional (right-brain)

Surprisingly, the so-called cognitive person (on the left) is controlled by his feelings just as is the so-called emotional person, but he doesn't realize it. For example, the stiff, formal intellectual has deep feelings also, but uses enormous energy to keep them buried so he won't be bothered with them. Unfortunately they do bother him. Whenever someone (like an "emotional" wife or child) is around asking him for affection and warmth, he might be unable to respond and angered that his equilibrium has been disturbed.

Communication is the process of sharing yourself, both verbally and nonverbally, in such a way that the other person can both accept and understand what you are sharing.

What is listening? Paul Tournier said "How beautiful, how grand and liberating this experience is, when people learn to help each other. It is impossible to overemphasize the immense need humans have to be really listened to. Listen to all the conversations of our world, between nations as well as those between couples. They are, for the most part, dialogues of the deaf."

The Living Bible expresses these thoughts about listening:

Any story sounds true until someone tells the other side and sets the record straight. (Proverbs 18:17)

The wise man leans by listening; the simpleton can learn only by seeing scorners punished. (Proverbs 21:11)

He who answers a matter before he hears the facts, it is folly and shame to him. (Proverbs 18:13, Amplified)

Let every man be quick to hear (a ready listener)... (James 1:19 Amplified)

4.8.4.1 What Kills Communication²¹

1. **Talking Too Much**: Good communication is balanced between talking and listening. You basically are not learning anything while you are talking. Some partners hide behind their verbiage and simply do not allow the other partner to share with them. Talking too much is very tiresome, not only for the speaker but for the person who has to listen. Many words do not convince a person. Sometimes the longer you talk the more obvious it is that you don't know what you're talking about!
2. **Not Saying Enough**: The other side of the talking problem is a typical way in which marital partners avoid confrontation—they just don't say anything. Ecclesiastes 3:7 says there is "...a time to be silent, and a time to speak." Your partner needs to hear from you as to what you think and believe about things. Unless you talk, he/she will not know what you are thinking or believing, and he will have a tendency to be suspicious of you. He will have a difficult time trusting you if you never share your feelings and thoughts with him. Sometimes, the verbal abuse we have received in the past keeps us from wanting to try again to talk. But talk we must! Your marriage will continue to deteriorate if there is no real communication taking place between the two of you.
3. **Exaggeration**: If you make a practice of exaggerating, your partner has a difficult time trusting you. Some people exaggerate to impress others. Other people exaggerate because they don't believe that people will respond to what really happened. A common problem in good communication is the matter of exaggerations—making too much out of something. Proverbs 13:3 says, "The one who guards his mouth preserves his life; the one who opens wide his lips comes to ruin." That verse is not talking about an exceptionally large mouth—it is speaking about the problem of exaggeration: "Opens wide his lips." Proverbs 22:13 adds, "The sluggard says, 'There is a lion outside; I shall be slain in the streets!'" The undisciplined person has a tendency to exaggerate a situation. Proverbs 25:14 says, "Like clouds and wind without rain is a man who boasts of his gifts falsely." Exaggeration can be a terrible habit, and it can seriously affect communication between husband and wife.
4. **Anger**: If you want to break down good communication, just get angry—that will do it every time! Prov. 17:27 says, "He who restrains his words has knowledge, and he who has a cool spirit is a man of understanding." It's hard to keep cool when we verbally attack or blame others. The one leads to the other. Prov. 19:11 says, "A man's discretion makes him slow to anger, and it is his glory to overlook a transgression." Instead of pointing out your partner's faults and mistakes, learn to overlook them and be forgiving. But what do you do when you do get angry? Some couples like to fight because they say they enjoy making up afterward! Some anger is justified if it is properly placed. It is right to get mad at sin, but not the sinner. Ephesians 4:26 says, "Be angry, and yet do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger." There are times when it is right to be angry, but the real danger comes when we stay angry or shift our anger from a situation to a person. We are never to be angry at *people*. Don't go to bed angry. Get things straightened out between the two of you before you go to sleep.
5. **Too Quick to Speak**: Prov. 18:13 states, "He who gives an answer before he hears, it is folly and shame to him." Prov. 25:8 warns, "Do not go out hastily to argue your case; otherwise, what will you do in the end, when your neighbor puts you to shame?" Prov. 29:20 puts it in proper perspective by saying, "Do you see a man who is hasty in his words? There is more hop for a fool than for him." Obviously, it is a serious problem to be too quick to speak.

²¹ Good Marriages Take Time. Bad Marriages Take More Time, David and Carole Hocking, ISBN 0-939497-40-9, Promise Publishing Co., 1996, pp. 14-20.

6. **Arguments:** Would you rather be happy, or would you rather be right? Have you ever noticed that no one seems to win in a marital argument? Prov. 18:19 says, “A brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city, and contentions [arguments] are like the bars of a castle.” Prov. 19:13 says, “...the contentions of a wife are a constant dripping.” Prov. 21:9 adds, “It is better to live in a corner of a roof, than in a house shared with a contentious woman.” Verse 19 says much the same thing: “It is better to live in a desert land, than with a contentious and vexing woman.” The same principle is stated one more time in Prov. 25:24. This is obviously an important point—it’s tough to live with argumentative people! Disagreements will exist in any marriage, but when they turn into serious arguments, they are destructive rather than constructive. Arguments occur for many reasons. Sometimes they happen because we have to be right and are unwilling to see the other person’s viewpoint. There is a time when we must agree to disagree. We must learn to accept others regardless of basic disagreements. But what do you do when the husband and wife disagree about a matter in which a decision must be made? This is where God’s order for marriage comes in. The husband is responsible to make the decision, and he must then live with (meaning not complain about) it and bear the responsibility for it. That’s not an easy assignment. He must carefully consider the wife’s viewpoint, ask God for wisdom, and then make the decision, trusting God to reveal in time whether it was right or wrong.
7. **Unforgiveness:** Unforgiving people tend to live in the past and keep bringing up past sins. This can be very irritating and threatening for the listener, and especially if the sins being discussed have already been repented for! Avoid being unforgiving.

4.8.4.2 What Creates or Enhances Communication²²

1. **Time:** Time is necessary to build good communication. Talking to each other on the run is not the way to do it. Quick comments and hurried conversation tend to hinder your ability to communicate effectively. Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 is an important passage on “time.” It tells us that there is a time for everything and every event under heaven. We need to realize this, and to enjoy the time that we have. We cannot live in the past or the future; *today* is all we have; and we must make the most of it. Take time to talk—it will continue to create good communication and feelings between the two of you.
2. **Honesty:** Sometimes honesty hurts, but it’s always the best way to go! Never lie to your marital partner. At some point in time you will regret it. Prov. 19:5 says, “A false witness will not go unpunished, and he who tells lies will not escape.” *The Bible is clear about the fact that if you lie you do not love the person to whom you tell the lie.* Prov. 26:28 says, “A lying tongue hates those it crushes, and a flattering mouth works ruin.” Flattery is rooted in deceit and lying, and it doesn’t belong in a good marriage.

Some people believe that if their partner committed adultery, they wouldn’t want to know about it. These people do not realize the importance of confession for the benefit of their marital partner. It is always more tragic for a marital partner to find out about a partner’s immorality from someone else. Some words of caution, however, are needed in this regard. We do not believe that it is either wise or necessary for marital partners to discuss in intimate details the sins of immorality which occurred before they ever met. If these former situations have been dealt with properly, confessed, and true repentance resulted, then they should not be brought up again. Also, we believe that things done before one’s salvation in Jesus Christ should be buried under His forgiveness. To

²² Good Marriages Take Time. Bad Marriages Take More Time, David and Carole Hocking, ISBN 0-939497-40-9, Promise Publishing Co., 1996, pp. 20-26.

bring up the past before you were a Christian can only do harm to your present relationship in Christ.

In addition, we believe it is extremely unwise to share your sinful *thoughts* with your partner in an effort to be completely open and honest. Ephesians 5:12 says, ‘For it is disgraceful even to speak of the things which are done by them in secret.’ This verse is speaking about the sinful practices of unbelievers, but by application we believe that it is also dangerous to share what our minds have thought. We are all sinners and capable of very wicked thoughts. We can hurt our marital partners and our own credibility by bringing up these sinful thoughts, especially when by bringing up these sinful thoughts, especially when they involve people with whom our marital partner is acquainted. We need to learn to bring our thoughts into captivity to Christ (2 Cor. 10:5)

3. **Trust**: Trust is a wonderful word, and it is essential to a good marriage as well as to good communication. There are two things that are involved: 1. Keeping confidences; 2. Dependability. With regard to keeping confidences, Prov. 17:9 says, ‘‘He who covers a transgression seeks love, but he who repeats a matter separates intimate friends.’’ Gossip is a terrible thing, and it is most severe when a marital partner gossips about the other partner. The old sin nature loves to hear gossip! Prov. 18:8 says, ‘‘The words of a whisperer are like dainty morsels, and they go down into the innermost parts of the body.’’ Prov 25:9-19 says: ‘‘Argue your case with your neighbor, and do not reveal the secret of another, lest he who hears it reproach you, and the evil report about you no pass away.’’ Marital partners need to keep confidences with each other. Trust means that we can rely upon our partners not to talk about things that we have shared in confidence.

The second aspect of trust deals with the matter of dependability. Can your partner rely on you? Prov. 17:17 says, ‘‘A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.’’ Prov. 25:10 adds, ‘‘Like a bad tooth and unsteady foot is confidence in a faithless man in time of trouble.’’

4. **Patience**: Love is patient (1 Cor. 13:4). Prov. 14:29 says, ‘‘He who is slow to anger has great understanding, but he who is quick-tempered exalts folly.’’ Getting angry is often the opposite of patience. Patience means ‘‘taking a long time to boil.’’ It is often translated ‘‘long-suffering’’ or ‘‘slow to anger.’’ Prov. 15:18 says, ‘‘A hot-tempered man stirs up strife, but the slow to anger [patient] pacifies contention.’’ Patience cools down a potentially dangerous argument. the great value of patience is painted for us in Prov. 16:32: ‘‘He who is slow to anger [patient] is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit, than he who captures a city.’’

I like to get to places on time, and I am usually ready to go a few minutes early, but I have learned not to rush my wife. She likes to know the exact time I plan on leaving, and she doesn’t want to be forced to leave any earlier than that. Sometimes I am convicted by my lack of patience when I’m ready to go and I keep pushing her. It doesn’t help my ability to communicate with her!

Being patient with your marital partner means that you give him or her time to explain. It means that you understand and are forgiving. While you may be upset with something that happened, it means that you do not transfer that to your partner and express anger. Patience means that you do not set standards of performance that cannot be met. It means that you give your partner time and room to breathe. If you are patient you are not judgmental; you are forgiving and kind. You do not have unrealistic expectations; you are not a perfectionist. You recognize the differences and uniqueness of your partner in relation to yourself.

5. **Complete Acceptance**: If your partner does not believe that you fully accept him or her, you will have a difficult time communicating with each other. No barrier is quit like that of a lack of

acceptance. It is extremely damaging to your self-worth and value. Romans 15:7 says, “Wherefore, accept one another, just as Christ accepted us to the glory of God.” When we realize what this involves, it becomes urgent for us to accept each other without reservation or hesitation. However, we can accept someone and love someone without accepting and loving their behavior. This is an important point to remember.

6. **Forgiveness**: The apostle Peter asked the Lord in Matthew 18:21, “...’Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Up to seven times?” Jesus responded in verse 22, “I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven.” Are you willing to forgive when the same offense has been committed several times? First Peter 4:8 says, “Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins.” Forgiveness flows out of a loving heart. Colossians 3:13 says, “Bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against any one; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you.

If you want to hinder communication, just refuse to forgive your partner! Nothing is as devastating to your marriage as an unforgiving spirit. Forgiveness is essential for good communication. The willingness to forgive is also the refusal to bring the issue up again and use it against your partner. Learn to bury it under the blood of Jesus Christ and His wonderful forgiveness! We should also remember what forgiveness means:

“Forgiveness means giving up my right to hurt you for hurting me.”

When you continually bring up a situation that supposedly was forgiven in the past, it reveals a bitter spirit and an unforgiving heart.

4.8.5 **Sex and Affection**

The fifth important foundation or component of a healthy marriage is regular sex and affection between the spouses. We will now better define the role and importance of sex in marriage in the following subsections.

4.8.5.1 **Purposes of Sex and Affection**

The Bible talks about four specific purposes for human sexual activity:

1. Procreation (Genesis 1:28; Deuteronomy 7:13-14)
2. Communication (Genesis 2:24)
3. Recreation. (Song of Solomon 4:10-12; Proverbs 5:18-19)
4. Release and protection for sexual immorality (1 Cor. 7:3-9)

We will now talk about these elements.

Procreation. Read Genesis 1:28 and Deuteronomy 7:13-14. What evidence to these verses give that sexual activity is for reproduction of the human race and is part of God’s design?

Reproduction. Read Psalms 127:3 and Psalm 139:13-15 from the Living Bible. What attitude toward human sexuality and reproduction do you discover in these verses?

Recreation and release. Read Song of Solomon 4:10-12 and Proverbs 5:18-19. Does it surprise or shock you that the Scriptures actually encourage the enjoyment and sensual delights of sex?

Reread Proverbs 5:18-19, remembering that the writer used poetic language as he spoke of sexual energies, drives, and outlets. Throughout the Bible a favorite symbol for sex is *water*—fountains, streams, cisterns, springs, wells, etc. Do you agree or disagree that Proverbs 5:18-19 encourages a husband and wife to come to their bed to experience sexual pleasure?

Communication. Read Genesis 2:24. Ideally the “one flesh” spoken of in this verse means a blending of spirit, mind, soul—your entire being—with your spouse.

In the plan of God, sex was intended to provide a means of totally revealing oneself to the beloved, of pouring one’s energies and deepest affection, hopes, and dreams into the loved one. Sex provides a means of presenting one’s spouse with the gift of oneself and experiencing a like gift in return; a means of saying, “I love you.” In short, sex becomes a mode of communication, a means of “knowing” each other.

Sex should be fun to both husband and wife, and it should be that special time when you become more close and intimate than at any other time. If things are not right between the two of you, your sex life will be disappointing, frustrating, or unfulfilling. In some respects, the level of enjoyment and satisfaction you have in your sex life is often a barometer of how the two of you are getting along.

4.8.5.2 **The Four Fundamental Laws of Sexual Satisfaction in Marriage**²³

Four fundamental laws of sexual satisfaction are taught by the Bible in 1 Corinthians 7:1-5. These four laws of sexual satisfaction are essential for sexual fulfillment and happiness in marriage. When a marriage starts to ignore or disobey any of these four laws, the ability of the partners to be completely satisfied with each other starts to deteriorate. The laws are:

1. **Marital Fidelity**: Marital faithfulness is paramount. Good sex is built on this principle. The trust that you have in each other makes your sexual life vital and enjoyable. When that trust is broken, sex is difficult, and sometimes impossible. There are many emotional and mental factors in having good sex. To give yourself completely to another person requires much trust and confidence. Genesis 2:24 says for a man to “cleave to his wife,” and this phrase is quoted again in Eph. 5:31. The Greek word in Ephesians refers to face-to-face sex. It is also used of cementing two blocks of stone together. It carries the idea of “gluing” yourself to your wife. Stick to her and to her alone! There ought to be no question or doubt about your loyalty to your marital partner. Romans 7:2 says, “For the married woman is bound by law to her husband while he is living; but if her husband dies, she is released from the law concerning the husband.” The commitment of marriage according to the Bible is a vow binding until death. Ecclesiastes 5:4-5 says:

“When you make a vow to God, do not be late in paying it, for He takes no delight in fools. Pay what you vow! It is better that you should not vow than that you should vow and not pay.”

The Marital Fidelity aspect of the four laws includes the following:

²³ Good Marriages Take Time. Bad Marriages Take More Time, David and Carole Hocking, ISBN 0-939497-40-9, Promise Publishing Co., 1996, pp. 65-80.

- 1.1. Rejoicing in the Wife of Your Youth.
- 1.2. Being Satisfied at All Times with her Breasts.
- 1.3. Being Excited with Her Love
- 1.4. Refusing to Find Sexual Satisfaction with Others.

2. **Immediate Response**: The second principle which affects our sexual relationship with each other is that of immediate response to the other partner's sexual need. First Corinthians 7:3 says, "Let the husband fulfill his duty to his wife, and likewise also the wife to her husband." The discussion involves immoralities (v. 2). To avoid the wrong use of sexual desire, the husband and wife need to learn how to respond to each other sexually. The Bible therefore teaches us to be responsive immediately to the other partner's needs, regardless of how we feel at the moment. Love is willing to give without thought of what is received in return.

Most husbands expect their wives to respond immediately to their sexual needs, but few sense that responsibility toward their wives. Sometimes the wife just wants to be held and embraced for a period of time, without jumping into bed! At other times, it's simply a matter of holding hands that meets the need. An arm around the waist while walking together may do it, while at other times much more passion and sexual activity is needed. Learning to be sensitive to each other's needs does not come easily. It takes time and years of caring.

According to the Bible, we are to respond to the other person's needs. If your partner needs affection, then give it, regardless of how you feel. Couples do much harm to each other when they hold back or refuse to give affection when it is needed. It is so easy to hurt our marital partner by simply not being affectionate.

3. **Sexual submission**: The foundation of sexual satisfaction is marital fidelity, and the motivation behind that satisfaction is immediate response to the needs of your partner. The extent to which sexual satisfaction is enjoyed is often related to the need of sexual submission. First Corinthians 7:4 contains this important truth about sexual submission: "The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does; and likewise also the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does." When you get married, you relinquish control of your physical body to your marital partner. Your body now belongs to your partner, and should be available at all times for your partner's enjoyment and satisfaction. The implication of this requirement is that there can be no such legal thing as rape inside the bonds of marriage. That is why rape is not allowed in the prenuptial agreement in section 9.9 later in this document.

One of the quickest ways to put a barrier between husband and wife is to hold back in sexual relationships. We learn soon that withholding sex from our partners is an easy way to hurt them and to demand their attention and response to us. But is it wrong and it is emotional abuse! It is sin to withhold physical affection from your marital partner. Your body belongs to your partner! Likewise, the outcome of not submitting is lustful thoughts, usually by the husband, toward other women, which leads to "adultery of the mind" as described by Jesus in Matt. 5:27-28. Since adultery is also a basis for divorce, as indicated in Matt. 5:31-32, then technically, refusal submit sexually is a grounds for divorce!

A willingness to submit your body to the physical and sexual advances of your partner without fear and hesitancy is essential for a satisfying and fulfilling sexual relationship. It takes trust and confidence in the other person. It is our responsibility to submit to each other. If your partner desires to engage in some physical activity with your body that you find repulsive or distasteful, do not become bitter or critical or hostile. Take a few minutes and discuss it with each other. Openly

share your feelings and the reasons behind your reluctance. Ask your partner for understanding and help.

4. **Continual Habit**: If the foundation of sexual satisfaction is marital fidelity, and if the motivation is immediate response, and the extent of the satisfaction is determined by sexual submission, then the strength of that satisfaction is related to continual habit. 1 Cor. 7:5 says, “Stop depriving one another, except by agreement for a time that you may devote yourselves to prayer, and come together again lest Satan tempt you because of your lack of self-control.”

It is sin to hold back sexual involvement from your marital partner when it is in your power and ability to give it. The Bible warns couples about such withholding tactics. Only God knows how much responsibility rests on the shoulders of marital partners who have refused sex with their partners and then discovered unfaithfulness resulted. It doesn't every excuse anyone who commits adultery from bearing the responsibility or shame of such action, but it is clear from this verse that withholding sex from your partner is sin, and often leads to immorality.

Do not try to determine how many times you should have sex with your partner each week by what other people say. You should have sex as often as is needed whether once a day or once a month. The motivation should be your partner's need. If he or she needs it, then give it!

The Bible warns us about the strategy of Satan when we deprive each other of sexual relationships. He knows our weaknesses, and the Bible says that he will tempt us, fully knowing our lack of self-control. It doesn't do any good to act like you don't have the problem. Any one of us under the right provocation can commit the greatest of sins! We simply do not have self-control in and of ourselves. Galatians 5:23 says that it is part of the “fruit” of the Holy Spirit. God's answer to avoiding the problem of sexual temptation is by having husband and wife giving to each other sexually by way of continual habit. What most of us do in this regard is quite dangerous. Instead of telling our partners that we have sexual need, we keep quiet, waiting for them to respond. But they can't read our minds! We need to tell them when we have a sexual need, and not feel guilty for communicating that need, as though we have some serious sexual malfunction.

When we are having problems submitting sexually to each other, we agree to read the following passage and pray about it together:

*Lord, it's hard to know what sex really is—
Is it some demon put here to torment me?
Or some delicious seducer from reality?
It is neither of these, Lord.
I know what sex is—
It is body and spirit,
It is passion and tenderness,
It is strong embrace and gentle hand-holding.
It is open nakedness and hidden mystery.
It is joyful tears and honeymoon faces, and
It is tears on wrinkled faces at a golden wedding anniversary.
Sex is a quit look across the room,
A love note on a pillow,
A rose laid on a breakfast plate,
Laughter in the night.*

*Sex is life—not all of life--
 But wrapped up in the meaning of life.
 Sex is your good gift, O God,
 To enrich life,
 To continue the race,
 To communicate,
 To show me who I am,
 To reveal my mate,
 To cleanse through “one flesh.”
 Lord, some people say sex and religion don’t mix;
 But your Word says sex is good.
 Help me to keep it good in my life.
 Help me to be open about sex
 And still protect its mystery.
 Help me to see that sex
 Is neither demon nor deity.
 Help me not climb into a fantasy world
 Of imaginary sexual partners;
 Keep me in the real world
 To love the people you have created.
 Teach me that my soul does not have to frown at sex.
 For me to be a Christian.
 It’s hard for many people to say,
 “Thank God for sex!”
 Because for them sex is more a problem
 Than a gift.
 They need to know that sex and gospel
 Can be linked together again.
 They need to hear the good news about sex.
 Show me how I can help them.
 Thank you, Lord, for making me a sexual being.
 Thank you for showing me how to treat others with trust and love.
 Thank you for letting me talk to you about sex.
 Thank you that I feel free to say: “Thank God for sex!”²⁴*

4.9 **Basic Rights in a Relationship**²⁵

1. The right to goodwill from the other.
2. The right to emotional support.
3. The right to be heard by the other and to be responded to with courtesy.
4. The right to have your own view, even if your mate has a different view.
5. The right to have your feelings and experience acknowledged as real.
6. The right to receive a sincere apology for any jokes you find offensive.
7. The right to clear, truthful, and informative answers to questions that concern what is legitimately your business.
8. The right to live free from accusation and blame.

²⁴ *Thank God for Sex*, Harry Hollis, Jr., Broadman Press, 1975, pp. 11-12.

²⁵ *The Verbally Abusive Relationship*, Patricia Evans; Adams Media Corp; ISBN 1558505822; 1996, p. 122.

9. The right to live free from criticism and judgment.
10. The right to have your work and your interests spoken of with respect.
11. The right to encouragement.
12. The right to live free from emotional and physical threat.
13. The right to live free from angry outbursts and rage.
14. The right to be called by no name that devalues you.
15. The right to be respectfully asked rather than ordered.
16. The right to behavior from your mate that is in agreement with what God says about relationships and marriage, and especially in the Bible book of Ephesians.
17. The right to equal time by the other spouse with any third party who you share information about your spouse with. Both spouses are expected to encourage and promote this equal time in order to prevent gossip and unfair or unbalanced characterizations of the other spouse.
18. The right to hold a family court or a family meeting when there are irreconcilable differences between spouses or children and spouses. Family court can be held only in families where there are children who can break a tie during votes. Parties should meet, present their case, and let the “jury” (family) decide on the verdict. This reinforces the idea that the family is a team instead of a dictatorship and encourages family members to express and explain their needs and expectations so they learn how to deal with their emotions and get their needs met.
19. The right to participate in and be consulted before making important decisions that might impact the family.

4.10 How to be Best Friends with Your Spouse²⁶

Below is a list of simple behaviors and techniques that we recommend in becoming best friends. We trust they will encourage you.

1. Spending a little time with each other each week.
2. Constant communication about our feelings, ideas, and desires.
3. Never criticizing each other in the presence of others; always building each other up.
4. Never believing that we have arrived by always working on our relationship.
5. Not suspicious of one another or jealous of relationships with others.
6. Total honesty and intimacy about sexual desires and fantasies.
7. A willingness to do whatever is possible to meet the other’s needs (including sexual).
8. Never interfering or trying to control the other partner’s role or domain.
9. Shopping together—learning to pick out each other’s clothes and communicating openly about what looks good and what doesn’t.
10. Willingness to minister to others without feeling threatened or resentful of the time spent and the emotions expended (including family and relatives).
11. Frequent compliments about sexual attractiveness and personality traits that are positive qualities.
12. Refusing to concentrate negative qualities of the other person (learning to live with the bad habits of your partner).
13. Learning to discuss in private and agree about the raising of children—especially about discipline.
14. Learning to laugh and have fun—not being concerned about what other think of our habits and practices (whether in the bedroom or outside).
15. Kissing each other after every prayer for meals.
16. Lots of physical affection and touching each other.

²⁶ Good Marriages Take Time. Bad Marriages Take More Time, David and Carole Hocking, ISBN 0-939497-40-9, Promise Publishing Co., 1996, p. 138.

17. Regular time for prayer and Bible reading with family.

4.11 Dealing with Differences Between Men and Women

This section identifies a few of the major difference between men and women and how to deal with them effectively in a relationship

4.11.1 Comparison Between Men and Women

The table below compares the men and women. While the generalizations made in the table are accurate for the vast majority of cases, they are not always accurate for every couple.

Table 4-5: Comparison Between Men and Women

#	<i>Men</i>	<i>Women</i>
1	Want sex: Give affection to get sex	Want affection: Give sex to get affection
2	Are visual and physical about relationships	Are emotional about relationships
3	When presented with a problem, want to “fix” it for the victim	When presented with a problem, want to show empathy for the victim
4	Are less verbal	Are more verbal
5	Are left-brain dominant	Are right-brain dominant
6	Get hot easily	Get cold easily
7	Have an intuition about <i>things</i>	Have an intuition about <i>people</i>
8	Like to <i>earn/save/invest</i> money	Like to <i>spend</i> money
9	Are more focused on their careers	Are more focused on their relationships with people and their family
19	Get most of their social interaction from their job and their wife	Get most social interaction from their husband, their family, relatives, church, and their friends
11	Want opportunity and freedom in the workplace and get their financial security from their job	Want financial security to be provided by their spouse so they can choose not to work
12	Are usually better with math and engineering	Are usually better with English and liberal arts
13	Are more rational and practical	Are more reactive
14	Get their identity from their work	Get their identity from their family
15	Are hunter-gatherers	Are “nest builders”
16	Like science shows	Like sitcoms and arts shows and movies
17	Like sports	Like family activities and being included in them
18	Have fewer friends	Have more friends
19	Are the disciplinarian in the family	Are the nurturer in the family
20	Expect to be asked when women need help	Expect men to read their minds about what they need, anticipate it, and satisfy that need before they even need to ask for help
21	Like to focus on one “big” thing	Like to focus on many “small” things

4.11.2 Behaviors Women Can Use to Score Points with Men

Men give points differently from women. Every time a woman appreciates what a man has done for her, he feels loved and gives her a point in return. To keep the score even in a relationship, a man really doesn't require anything but love. Women don't realize the power of their love and many times unnecessarily seek to earn a man's love by doing more things for him than they want to do.

When a woman appreciates what a man does for her, he gets much of the love he needs. Remember, men primarily need appreciation. Certainly a man also requires equal participation from a woman in doing the domestic duties of the day-to-day life, but if he is not appreciated, then her contribution is nearly meaningless and completely unimportant to him.

Similarly, a woman cannot appreciate the big things a man does for her unless he is also doing a lot of little things. Doing a lot of little things fulfills her primary needs to feel cared for, understood, and respected.

A major source of love for a man is the loving reaction that a woman has to his behavior. He has a love tank too, but his is not necessarily filled by what she does for him. Instead, it is mainly filled by how she reacts to him or how she feels about him.

When a woman prepares a meal for a man, he gives her one point or ten points, depending on how she is feeling toward him. If a woman secretly resents a man, a meal she may cook for him will mean very little to him—he may even give minus points because she was resenting him. The secret to fulfilling a man lies in learning to express love through your feelings, not necessarily through your actions.

Philosophically speaking, when a woman feels loving, her behavior will automatically express that love. When a man expresses himself in loving behavior, automatically his feelings will follow and become more loving.

Even if a man is not feeling his love for a woman, he can still decide to do something loving for her. If his offering is received and appreciated, then he will begin to feel his love for her again. "Doing" is an excellent way to prime a man's love pump.

However, women are very different. A woman generally does not feel loved if she doesn't feel cared about, understood, or respected. Making a decision to do something more for her partner will not help her feel more loving. Instead it may actually fuel her resentment. When a woman is not feeling her loving feelings, she needs to focus her energies directly on healing her negative feelings and definitely not on doing more.

A man needs to prioritize "loving behavior," for this will ensure that his partner's love needs are met. It will open her heart and also open his heart to feel more loving. A man's heart opens as he succeeds in fulfilling a woman.

A woman needs to prioritize "loving attitudes and feelings," which will ensure that her partner's love needs are fulfilled. As a woman is able to express loving attitudes and feelings toward a man, he feels motivated to give more. This then assists her in opening her heart even more. A woman's heart opens more as she is able to get the support she needs.

Women are sometimes unaware of when a man really needs love. At such times a woman can score twenty to thirty points. Below is a list of how women can score points with men.

Table 4-6: Behaviors Women Can Use to Score Points with Men²⁷

#	<i>How Women can score points with men</i>	
	<i>Behavior</i>	<i>Points</i>
1	He makes a mistake and she doesn't say "I told you so" or offer advice	10-20
2	He disappoints her and she doesn't punish him.	20-20
3	He gets lost while driving and she doesn't make a big deal out of it	10-20
4	He gets lost and she sees the good in the situation and says "We would never have seen this beautiful sunset if we had taken the most direct route."	20-30
5	He forgets to pick up something and she says "It's OK. Would you do it next time you are out?"	10-20
6	He forgets to pick up something again and she says with trusting patience and persistence "It's OK. Would you still get it?"	20-30
7	When she has hurt him and she understands his hurt, she apologizes and gives him the love he needs.	20-30
8	She asks for his support and he says no and she is not hurt by his rejection but trusts that he would if he could. She does not reject him or disapprove of him.	10-20
9	Another time she asks for his support and he again says no. She does not make him feel wrong but accepts his limitations at that time.	20-30
10	She asks for his support without being demanding when he assumes the score is somewhat even.	1-5
11	She asks for support without being demanding when she is upset or he knows she has been giving more.	10-30
12	When he withdraws she doesn't make him feel guilty.	10-20
13	When he comes back from having withdrawn emotionally, she welcomes him and doesn't punish him or reject him.	10-20
14	When he apologizes for a mistake and she receives it with loving acceptance and forgiveness. The bigger the mistake he makes the more points he gives.	10-50
15	When he asks her to do something and she says no without giving a list of reasons why she can't do it.	1-10
16	When he asks her to do something and she says yeas and stays in a good mood.	1-10
17	When he wants to make up after a fight and starts doing little things for her and she starts appreciating him again.	10-30
18	She is happy to see him when he gets home.	10-20
19	She feels disapproving and instead of expressing it she goes in another room and privately centers herself and then comes back with a more centered and loving heart.	10-20
20	On special occasions she overlooks his mistakes that might normally upset her.	20-40
21	She really enjoys having sex with him.	10-40
22	He forgets where he put his keys and she doesn't look at him as though he was irresponsible.	20-20
23	She is tactful or graceful in expressing her dislike or disappointment about a restaurant or movie when on a date.	10-20
24	She doesn't give advice when he is driving or parking the car and then appreciates him for getting them there.	10-20
25	She asks for his support rather than dwelling on what he has done wrong.	10-20
26	She shares her negative feelings in a centered way without blaming,	10-40

²⁷ *Men are From Mars, Women are From Venus*, John Gray, PhD., 1992, HarperPerennial, pp. 199-202. ISBN 0-06-016848.

#	<i>How Women can score points with men</i>	
	<i>Behavior</i>	<i>Points</i>
	rejecting, or being disapproving of him.	

4.11.3 Behaviors Men Can Use to Score Points with Women²⁸

There are a variety of ways a man can score points with his partner without having to do much. It is just a matter of redirecting the energy and attention he is already giving. Most men already know about many of these things but don't bother to do them because they don't realize how important the little things are to a woman. A man truly believes the little things are insignificant when compared to the big things he is doing for her.

Some men may start out in a relationship doing the little things, but having done them once or twice they stop. Through some mysterious instinctive force, they begin to focus their energies into doing one bit thing for their partners. They then neglect to do all the little things that are necessary for a woman to feel fulfilled in the relationship. To fulfill a woman, a man needs to understand what she needs to feel loved and supported.

The way women score points is not just a preference but a true need. Women need many expressions of love in a relationship to feel loved. One or two expressions of love, no matter how important, will not, and cannot, fulfill her.

This can be extremely hard for a man to understand. One way to look at it is to imagine that women have a love tank similar to the gas tank on a car. It needs to be filled over and over again. Doing many little things (and scoring many points) is the secret for filling a woman's love tank. A woman feels loved when her love tank is full. She is able to respond with greater love, trust, acceptance, appreciation, admiration, approval, and encouragement. Lots of little things are needed to top off her tank.

Following is a list of 101 of the little ways a man can keep his partner's love tank full. Each item counts for 1 point:

WAYS TO SCORE POINTS WITH A WOMAN

1. Affection

- 1.1. Give her four hugs a day.
- 1.2. Offer to give her a back or neck or foot massage (or all three).
- 1.3. Make a point of cuddling or being affectionate sometimes without being sexual.
- 1.4. Display attention in public.
- 1.5. When holding hands don't let your hand go limp.
- 1.6. Touch her with your hand sometimes when you talk to her.
- 1.7. Give her a kiss and say good-bye when you leave.

2. Empathy

- 2.1. Resist the temptation to solve her problems—empathize instead.
- 2.2. Validate her feelings when she is upset.

²⁸ *Men are From Mars, Women are From Venus*, John Gray, PhD., 1992, HarperPerennial, pp-180-185. ISBN 0-06-016848

- 2.3. When she asks for support, say yes or no without making her wrong for asking.
- 2.4. Whenever her feelings have been hurt, give her some empathy and tell her “I’m sorry you feel hurt.” Then be silent; let her feel your understanding of her hurt. Don’t offer solutions or explanations why her hurt is not your fault.
- 2.5. Whenever you need to pull away emotionally, let her know you will be back or that you need some time to think about things.
- 2.6. When you’ve cooled off and you come back, talk about what was bothering you in a respectful, non-blaming way, so she doesn’t imagine the worst.
- 2.7. Take her side when she is upset with someone.
- 2.8. Be understanding when she is late or decides to change her outfit.
- 2.9. Notice how she is feeling and comment on it—“You look happy today” or “You look tired”—and then ask a question like “How was your day?”
- 2.10. Ask her how she is feeling.

3. Thankfulness, Interest, and Encouragement

- 3.1. Complement her on how she looks.
- 3.2. Pay more attention to her than to others in public.
- 3.3. Make her more important than the children. Let the children see her getting your attention first and foremost.
- 3.4. When she prepares a meal, compliment her cooking.
- 3.5. Show interest in what she does during the day, in the books she reads and the people she relates to.
- 3.6. When listening to her, reassure her that you are interested by making little noises like ah ha, uh-huh, oh, mmhuh, and hmmm.
- 3.7. If she has been sick in some way, ask for an update and ask how she is doing or feeling.
- 3.8. Laugh at her jokes and humor.
- 3.9. Verbally say thank you when she does things for you.
- 3.10. Notice when she gets her hair done and give a reassuring compliment.
- 3.11. Ask her specific questions about her day that indicate an awareness of what she was planning to do (e.g., “How did your appointment with the doctor go?”).

4. Helpfulness

- 4.1. If she generally makes dinner or if it is her turn and she seems tired or really busy, offer to make dinner.
- 4.2. Offer to help her when she is tired.
- 4.3. Notice when she is upset or tired and ask what she has to do. Then offer to help by doing a few of her “to do” items.
- 4.4. When going out, ask if there is anything she wants you to pick up at the store, and remember to pick it up.
- 4.5. If she usually washes the dishes, occasionally offer to wash the dishes, especially if she is tired that day.
- 4.6. Make the bed and clean up the bedroom.
- 4.7. If she washes your socks, turn your socks right side out so she doesn’t have to.
- 4.8. Notice when the trash is full and offer to empty it.
- 4.9. Wash her car.
- 4.10. Suggest different restaurants for going out; don’t put the burden of figuring out where to go on her.
- 4.11. Offer to drive the car on long trips.
- 4.12. Offer to fix something around the house. Say “What needs to be fixed around here? I have some extra time.” Don’t take on more than you can do.

- 4.13. Offer to sharpen her knives in the kitchen.
- 4.14. Buy some good Super Glue to fix things that are broken.
- 4.15. Offer to change light bulbs as soon as they go out.
- 4.16. Help with recycling the trash.
- 4.17. Keep the bathroom floor clean and dry it after taking a shower.
- 4.18. Open the door for her.
- 4.19. Offer to carry the groceries.
- 4.20. Offer to carry heavy boxes to her.
- 4.21. If she washes the dishes or it is her turn, offer to help scrub pots or other difficult tasks.
- 4.22. Make a “to fix” list and leave it in the kitchen. When you have extra time do something on that list for her. Don’t let it get too long.
- 4.23. If she is tired, offer to make her some tea.
- 4.24. Organize and prepare a picnic. (Remember to bring a picnic cloth).
- 4.25. If she handles the laundry, bring the clothes to the cleaners or offer to do the wash.
- 4.26. If she normally shops for food, offer to do the shopping.

5. Respect

- 5.1. Upon returning home find her first before doing anything else.
- 5.2. Practice listening and asking questions.
- 5.3. Give her twenty minutes of unsolicited, quality attention (don’t read the newspaper or be distracted by anything else during this time).
- 5.4. When she talks to you, put down the magazine or turn off the TV and give her your full attention.
- 5.5. Be patient when she is sharing. Don’t look at your watch.
- 5.6. Don’t flick the remote control to different channels when she is watching TV with you.
- 5.7. Drive slowly and safely, respecting her preferences. After all, she is sitting powerless in the front seat.
- 5.8. Write out neatly any phone message you may take for her.
- 5.9. When listening to her talk, use eye contact.
- 5.10. Don’t answer the phone at intimate moments or if she is sharing vulnerable feelings.
- 5.11. Negotiate in a manner that shows her that you want her to get what she wants and you also want what you want. Be caring, but don’t be a martyr.

6. Romance and Intimacy

- 6.1. Offer to build a fire in wintertime.
- 6.2. Tell her “I love you” at least a couple times every day.
- 6.3. Wash your car and clean up the interior before a date with her.
- 6.4. Wash before having sex or put on a cologne if she likes that.
- 6.5. Create occasions when you both can dress up.
- 6.6. Take short romantic getaways.
- 6.7. Take her dancing or take dancing lessons together.
- 6.8. Surprise her with a love note or poem.
- 6.9. Treat her in ways you did at the beginning of the relationship.
- 6.10. Get ready to go to sleep together and get in bed at the same time.
- 6.11. Create special time to be alone together.
- 6.12. Go bicycling together, even if it’s just a short ride.
- 6.13. Take her for a walk without the children.
- 6.14. Eat lightly on romantic occasions so that you don’t become stuffed and tired later.

7. Thoughtfulness

- 7.1. Bring her cut flowers as a surprise as well as on special occasions.

- 7.2. Plan a date several days in advance, rather than waiting until Friday night and asking her what she wants to do.
 - 7.3. When you are going to be late, call her and let her know.
 - 7.4. Let her know when you are planning to take a nap or leave.
 - 7.5. Call her from work to ask how she is or to share something exciting or to tell her “I love you.”
 - 7.6. Learn her favorite drinks so you can offer her a choice of the ones that you know she already likes.
 - 7.7. Get season tickets for the theater, symphony, opera, ballet, or some other type of performance she likes.
 - 7.8. Buy her little presents—like a small box of chocolates or perfume.
 - 7.9. Buy her an outfit (take a picture of your partner along with her sizes to the store and let them help you select it).
 - 7.10. Take pictures of her on special occasions.
 - 7.11. Let her see that you carry a picture of her in your wallet and update it from time to time.
 - 7.12. Write a note or make a sign on special occasions such as anniversaries and birthdays.
 - 7.13. When taking her out, study in advance the directions so that she does not have to feel responsible to navigate.
 - 7.14. Read out loud or cut out sections of the newspaper that would interest her.
 - 7.15. Bring home her favorite pie or dessert.
 - 7.16. Let her know that you missed her when you went away.
 - 7.17. Ask her to add her thoughts to this list.
 - 7.18. Leave the bathroom seat down.
8. Travel
- 8.1. Schedule extra time when traveling so that she doesn’t have to rush.
 - 8.2. When you are out of town, call to leave a telephone number where you can be reached and to let her know you arrived safely.
 - 8.3. When staying in a hotel, have them prepare the room with something special, like a bottle of champagne or sparkling apple juice or flowers.
 - 8.4. On trips, handle the luggage and be responsible for packing it in the car.

4.12 The Evil Woman

In addition to describing the characteristics and roles of each spouse in successful relationships, the Bible also describes in detail the behaviors of an evil woman who should be avoided. Woe unto you if you marry a woman who has any of the characteristics listed below:

Table 4-7: Role of Husbands

#	Behavior	Description	Scripture(s)
1	Gossip	“A perverse mouth sows strife, and a whisperer separates the best of friends.”	Prov. 16:28 Lev. 19:16 1 Tim. 5:13
2	Destroys her house with her own hands	“The wise woman builds her house, but the foolish woman pulls it down with her hands.”	Prov. 14:1
3	Greedy	“He who is greedy for gain troubles his own house, but he who hates bribes will live.”	Prov. 15:27
4	Angry and contentious	“Better to dwell in the wilderness than with a contentious and angry woman.”	Prov. 21:19 Prov. 21:28 Prov. 27:15-16

#	Behavior	Description	Scripture(s)
5	Evil mouth	“The mouth of an immoral woman is a deep pit; he who is abhorred by the Lord will fall there.”	Prov. 22:14

4.13 Money: The Great Mischief Maker

4.13.1 Facing Money Problems²⁹

No problem can hit your marriage harder than that of money. Some counselors call it “the bottom line.” It seems that many marriages are constantly torn apart by money problems. As a matter of fact, 70% of divorces are related to money issues, and this is true even in Christian marriages.

Couples disagree on the use of their money, and many fail to find contentment with what they have. Wives often go to work outside the home in order to have money they can call their own, only to discover a growing resentment by their husbands.

Many husbands do not anticipate the needs of their wives, and thus never provide any money for them to use except for the basic needs of the home, such as food and clothes for the children.

Some men complain that their wives don’t live within their incomes. They feel bitter toward their wives’ spending habits.

Many wives resent their husbands’ reluctance to spend any money on them and their needs.

Marriage counselors will tell you that money is something over which husband and wife can have serious conflict. Because feelings of hostility and bitterness can be quickly generated in money matters, husband and wife must learn to talk about it without anger or resentment. They must also learn to reach an agreement about money issues and commit themselves to having enough discipline to stick to the agreement and budget. Written agreements are best because they leave the least "wiggle room". A good place to start in their agreement about money is found in section 9.9 of this document, the Pre-Nuptial Agreement. If a pre-marital couple can't even talk about what is in this section or what is in section 9 and mutually agree on how they want to handle the issues it discusses, then chances are good that they will have big communication and anger problems later about money and many other issues.

There are at least four major problems that we must face in relationship to our financial resources. These problems must be dealt with in order to have a successful and happy marital relationship. As one woman said: “How can I go to bed with a man who is in so much debt!” You’re deceiving yourself if you think that money problems will not affect your response to your partner.

4.13.1.1 Ownership

As children, we grow up saying “mine.” We learn to be possessive with our toys instead of sharing, and it’s hard to break this habit as we grow older. The things we own bring us a certain security and

²⁹ Good Marriages Take Time. Bad Marriages Take More Time, David and Carole Hocking, ISBN 0-939497-40-9, Promise Publishing Co., 1996, pp. 145-151.

happiness that makes it hard for us to give them up. A girl who grows up in a wealthy home, being used to having many nice things, and then chooses to marry a boy who wants to make it on his own, without parental help, is headed for serious marital problems if this situation is not bathed in understanding and contentment.

God is the owner of everything. Communism says that the state owns everything, and capitalism believes in the individual's right to private property. But the Christian believes that God is the owner of everything and that we are just temporary stewards of all that His gracious hand has allowed us to possess and use. Psalm 24:1 says, "The earth is the Lord's, and all it contains, the world, and those who dwell in it." First Chronicles 29:11 states:

Thine, O Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, indeed everything that is in the heavens and the earth; Thine is the dominion, O Lord, and Thou dost exalt Thyself as head over all.

If the things you have belong to God, and you see yourself as His steward, your attitudes will be different. You can part with things easier. When things are lost, stolen, or given away, your attitudes are greatly affected by your view of ownership.

When a couple gets married, the word "mine" must change to "ours" under the overall conviction that everything is "His." It is dangerous to have possessions under separate or individual control, and not held jointly. Couples who are truly one in everything they do and have prefer to place everything they have in the names of both partners. This simple act cements their relationship in a way that couples who have separate accounts and separate possessions cannot experience.

4.13.1.2 Security

Our security should not be found in what we possess, but it often is. We all have the problem of feeling secure by what we own and by the size of our bank account, salary, savings, or financial investments. First Timothy 6:7 says, "For we have brought nothing into the world, so we cannot take anything out of it either." A simple truth, but easy to ignore! *Things* are more tangible and more easily accepted as security than *teaching or beliefs*, which cannot be seen or realized until the future.

First Timothy 6:17 says:

Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy.

Riches cannot bring you happiness or security; only God can do that. Many people have trusted in their wealth only to discover its failure to give them the security they needed in time of crisis.

4.13.1.3 Greed

Some say that greed is a "Judas problem," since it was greed that drove him to betray his Master, our Lord Jesus Christ. He was the treasurer of the apostles, and for the price of a slave (30 pieces of silver) he became a traitor. Some people have betrayed their friends for even less money!

Greed is a terrible problem. There is something in all of us that wants to have more than what we presently have. Greed can rip a marriage to pieces. The desire to be rich is a serious evil which can control the poor as well as the rich. First Timothy 6:9 says:

But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction.

When will we ever learn? One of the most important verses you can learn about money is 1 Timothy 6:10:

For the love of money is the root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith, and pierced themselves with many a pang.

It is not money itself that is the root of all kinds of evil; it is the *love* of money. You begin to long for it as though it will solve all your problems! Luke 12:13-21 tells the story of one man who thought this:

And someone in the crowd said to Him, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the family inheritance with me." But He said to him, "Man, who appointed Me a judge or arbiter over you?" And He said to them, "Beware, and be on your guard against every form of greed; for not even when one has an abundance does his life consist of his possessions." And He told them a parable saying, "The land of a certain rich man was very productive. And he began reasoning to himself, saying, 'What shall I do, since I have no place to store my crops?' And he said, 'This is what I will do: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years to come; take your ease, eat, drink and be merry." But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your soul is required of you; and now who will own what you have prepared?' So is the man who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.

How could it be said any better? Greed is a serious error in judgment.

4.13.1.4 Control

We feel a certain sense of authority and control through the use of our money. A certain power accompanies a measure of wealth. How foolish we are! First Chronicles 29:12 says, "Both riches and honor come from Thee, and Thou dost rule over all, and in Thy hand is power and might; and it lies in Thy hand to make great, and to strengthen everyone." Romans 11:36 adds, "For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen"

God is in control, not you! First Corinthians 4:7 reminds us:

For who regards you as superior? And what do you have that you did not receive? But if you did receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?

Our ability to earn money is given by God, and He can take it away anytime He wants to do it. A little financial setback can bring us quickly to our senses. We are dependent upon Him and His control.

When a marital partner feels that money brings control, it ruins the relationship you should have with your partner. A sense of superiority begins to dominate that relationship because of money.

Money can give you an attitude of dominance over other people. You begin to think that you are in control because you hold the cash. Your attitudes change. This often happens in a marriage. One partner (usually the husband) begins to dominate and control the other partner because the money is being controlled by one person. The partner who does not control the money begins to feel helpless and subservient to the partner who does. It is difficult to sense equality and unity in such a marriage.

4.13.2 How Should We Look at Our Money?³⁰

The above four problems (ownership, security, greed, and control) must be faced. Don't try to run away from them or ignore discussing them. These problems are rooted in a lack of understanding as to the purposes of money. How should we use our money? What should be our attitudes toward it when we have it? What attitudes should we have when we don't have as much as we would like to have?

4.13.2.1 Provide Basic Material Needs

No, that new sports car is not a basic material need! Neither is that microwave oven, or new furniture for the living room. While one man's needs are another man's desires, there is a certain principle that should be emphasized as to what basic material needs really are. That is the principle of survival. First Timothy 6:8 says, "And if we have food and covering, with these we shall be content." Nothing is so basic as food and clothing. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said (Matthew 6:25-34) that we are to examine the birds and lilies of the field to see how our heavenly Father takes care of them. He spoke of basic needs of food, drink, and clothing. Even in these things we are to trust God and seek him first, for He knows about our needs and has promised to supply them.

First Timothy 5:8 says:

But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.

Obviously, it is a serious matter when a man does not provide the basic material needs of his own family. We believe that this responsibility belongs to the husband and father. He needs his wife and family to depend upon him. It is essential for his emotional state and self-worth to sense his personal responsibility and accountability for the basic material needs of his family.

A certain amount of money should be budgeted each month for basic needs of food, clothing, and shelter (home). Do not spend this money on other things, thinking that you can someday make it up. You must sense your accountability in this matter, or else more serious difficulties will arise in the future.

4.13.2.2 Support the Work of the Gospel

³⁰ Good Marriages Take Time. Bad Marriages Take More Time, David and Carole Hocking, ISBN 0-939497-40-9, Promise Publishing Co., 1996, pp. 151-155.

The values and priorities of Christians are very much different from the unbelieving friends. All that we are and have belongs to God, and we are stewards of it. A part of our stewardship is to use our money to support the work of the gospel. This should be our commitment and not simply a matter of convenience.

Romans 10:5 says, “How shall they preach unless they are sent?...” This “sending” involves financial support. It takes money to send the workers around the world. Paul adds to this in 1 Corinthians 9:13-14 when he says:

Do you not know that those who perform sacred services eat the food of the temple, and those who attend regularly to the altar have their share with the altar? So also the Lord directed those who proclaim the gospel to get their living from the gospel.

Notice carefully that the Lord “directed” this support of the workers who take the gospel around the world.

In 1 Timothy 5:17-18, Paul admonishes Timothy about matters relating to the leadership of the churches over which he had responsibility. They were to be honored and supported.

Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching. For the Scripture says, ‘You shall not muzzle the ox while he is threshing,’ and ‘The laborer is worthy of his wages.’

The leaders of our local churches as well as the workers we send out to reach our world for Christ should be supported by the believers in the churches. This should be done willingly and with careful planning. Second Corinthians 9:7 instructs, “Let each one do just as he has purposed in his heart; not grudgingly or under compulsion; for God loves a cheerful giver.”

We believe that one of the reasons some couples do not experience the blessing of the Lord in their marriages is due to their failure to support the work of the gospel with their financial resources. It is a joy to give our money for this purpose, and it is a part of our overall commitment to the Great Commission of our Lord Jesus Christ (Matthew 28:19-20).

4.13.2.3 Help Others in Time of Need

One of the great joys of having money is the opportunity to help other people in time of need. The Bible is filled with admonitions regarding this use of our money. Ephesians 4:28 says:

Let him who steals steal no longer; but rather let him labor, performing with his own hands what is good, in order that he may have something to share with him who has need.

In addition, James 2:15-16 connects this use of our money with faith. It tells us that helping others in time of need shows that our faith is real because it produces good works.

First John 3:17-18 adds these words to the argument:

But whoever has the world's goods, and beholds his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him? Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth.

It will do wonders for your marriage when the two of you seek to minister to others. It has a tendency to draw you together around a purpose outside yourselves. The Bible promises that happiness will be yours if you learn to help others in time of need. Acts 20:35 tells us that the Lord Jesus Taught us the principle "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

4.13.2.4 Enjoy the Blessings of God

Ecclesiastes is an Old Testament book, written by King Solomon, that expresses the meaning of life itself. It gives helpful advice on why we do what we do, and what it all means for both time and eternity. Ecclesiastes 2:24-25 says:

There is nothing better for a man than to eat and drink and tell himself that his labor is good. This also I have seen, that it is from the hand of God. For who can eat and who can have enjoyment without Him?

It is not wrong to enjoy the material blessings that God has given you, but it is important to recognize His gracious hand in it all.

Some couples believe that they are doing wrong if they spend any money on themselves and their personal enjoyment. Ecclesiastes seems to suggest otherwise. Much depends on your priorities and the total factors involved in the use of your money. To spend it on your personal pleasures and ignore your debts is, of course, wrong. To neglect your responsibilities toward your family and the work of the gospel is also wrong. But when your overall attitude toward money is correct, it is not wrong to enjoy the blessings of God. In Ecclesiastes 5:18-20, the argument is well stated:

Here is what I have seen to be good and fitting: to eat, to drink and enjoy oneself in all one's labor in which he toils under the sun during the few years of his life which God has given him; for this is his reward. Furthermore, as for every man to whom God has given riches and wealth, He has also empowered him to eat from them and to receive his reward and rejoice in his labor; this is the gift of God. For he will not often consider the years of his life, because God keeps him occupied with the gladness of his heart.

Money problems must be faced. Our attitudes toward our money must be brought into conformity with the teaching of God's Word. When that happens, we are much more capable of handling the difficult financial situations that inevitably come in every marriage.

4.13.3 Don't Let Money Control Your Life!³¹

Your money problems can control you and your marriage. When you start arguing with your partner over the use of money, your marriage starts to suffer. It is difficult to relate emotionally to your

³¹ Good Marriages Take Time. Bad Marriages Take More Time, David and Carole Hocking, ISBN 0-939497-40-9, Promise Publishing Co., 1996, pp. 157-168.

partner when money problems are not resolved, and especially when you do not agree as to how they should be handled.

We have found the following insights from God's Word to be the most helpful in our marriage. We call them "fundamentals" because we believe that, regardless of your income, they should be applied.

4.13.3.1 Honor the Lord First

The first check you write should be to the Lord! Take it right off the top! Don't be limited by 10 percent, but learn to express your commitment to Him by the way you give. Don't wait until the end of the month to see if you have any "extra" cash to give to your church or its missionaries. Make it your number-one priority. Proverbs 3:9-10 says, "Honor the Lord from your wealth, and from the first of all your produce; so your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will overflow with new wine." Many marriages suffer right at this point. When you do not honor the Lord first a multitude of other difficulties arise. God has promised to bless you if you Honor Him first! God said to Israel in Malachi 3:7-10:

From the days of your fathers you have turned aside from My statutes, and have not kept them. Return to Me, and I will return to you," says the Lord of hosts. "But you say, "'How shall we return?" "Will a man rob God? Yet you are robbing Me! But you say, 'How have we robbed Thee?' "In tithes and contributions. You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing Me, the whole nation of you! Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in My house, and test Me now in this," says the Lord of hosts, "If I will not open for you the windows of heaven, and pour out for you a blessing until there is no more need.

Perhaps the "windows of heaven" are not opened to you and your marriage because you are not honoring the Lord first. Since God owns everything, our giving to Him is not because He is in need or because He needs the money to act in our behalf. We glorify God and recognize His ownership of all we have by our gifts to Him. God has promised to bless us and to supply our every need.

You may want your marriage to be better than what it presently is, but did you ever think that your problems might be rooted in this matter of honoring the Lord first? How much are you giving each month to the Lord? Does it express your love for Him? The amount you give is not the issue, but rather the heart attitude behind it. First Corinthians 16:1-2 says:

"Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I directed the churches of Galatia, so do you also. On the first day of every week let each one of you put aside and save, as he may prosper..."

How much should you give? "As he may prosper" is the standard. Second Corinthians 9:6 adds, "Now this I say, he who sows sparingly shall also reap sparingly; and he who sows bountifully shall also reap bountifully." The "sow-reap" principle should affect how much we give.

4.13.3.2 Stay Out of Debt

No principle in Scripture about money is more important than staying out of debt. Debt has ruined many marriages. It saps your emotional energy and continues to discourage you. Debt is one of the most devastating issues that can strike your marital happiness.

Romans 13:8 says, “Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law.” Does this mean that you should never buy anything that requires monthly payments? Does it mean to wait until you have enough cash before you buy anything? How about a home? A car?

Debt is a serious issue as it relates to marriage. Heartache and misunderstandings result from couples who have delved deep into debt. Proverbs 22:7 remarks that “...the borrower becomes the lender’s slave.” We have developed the following view about debt. IT may not agree with your view, but at least evaluate its potential in this inflationary society. In answer to the question “When are you in debt?” we give the following two answers.

1) When money is owed with payments due and you are unable to make your payments.

If you can’t make your payments, you are in debt and should do whatever is necessary to get out of debt as soon as possible. You’ll be so glad you did, and your marriage will be so much better!

2) When the amount owed (liability) exceeds the value (asset) of an item.

This particular “debt problem” is quite common today. We believe that it is a serious problem and very dangerous to the well-being of your marriage and family. This problem confronts us when we purchase an item with a limited amount of money down and must pay high interest payments.

If the item is a depreciating item (such as furniture, clothes, boats, some cars, etc.), you wind up losing a great deal and often being in serious debt. We are all programmed by mass media to buy now and pay later. We suggest that you never buy an item on the spur of the moment. Take time to think about it and evaluate it in the light of your needs and possible indebtedness that you might incur.

4.13.3.3 Be Content with What You Have

Are you content with what you have? Take a moment to reflect on your home, your furniture, your car, your clothes, etc. Are you satisfied with what you have, or do you constantly wish that things were better, newer, or nicer?

Discontent can ruin a marriage. A wife is not satisfied with the things in her home, and then she becomes dissatisfied with her husband because he cannot afford to buy her the things she wants. That kind of marriage is headed for serious trouble, and eventually winds up in the divorce court if it is not resolved.

Paul wrote in Philippians 4:11-12:

Not that I speak from want; for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need.

Contentment—how sweet it is! Hebrews 13:5 says, “Let your way of life be free from the love of money, being content with what you have; for He Himself has said, ‘I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you.’ “We have nothing to fear by being content with what we have. Our Lord has promised to take care of us and never desert us!

4.13.3.4 Depend on the Husband/father to Provide

Our hearts go out to single parents, especially women, who must be both a mother and a father to the children. The problem of the single parent is growing. A church that cares can provide some encouragement and fellowship in this area, but it is still a difficult problem.

When we talk about husbands and fathers providing for the needs of the family, there are many wives and mothers who have a deep hurt and heartache over such discussion, for they are the victims of husbands who have not supported them. It makes us realize how important this particular principle is to a happy and successful marriage.

We try to help those whose lives have been hurt by the failure of the husband and father to provide the needs, but we realize that prevention is better than trying to heal the hurts. We must get at the present marriages that are still together and put the emphasis where it belongs and where God’s Word says it rests—squarely on the shoulders of the husband and father.

We have seen men (as well as women) suffer from this problem. Men need to feel that they are accountable for the needs of their wives and families. Men suffer deeply when they are not the breadwinners of the family.

One of the great tragedies happening amount American families is the shift away from dependency upon the husband/father to provide the needs of the family. The reasons are many. Some say it is caused by inflation; others say it is due to wives joining the work force and making money on their own. Many men are neglecting their responsibilities toward their wives and families and are simply not meeting their needs.

When the children are small (preschool age), the wife needs to be home with them. After the children go to school, there is no problem with the wife working, provided that the money she makes is not used to meet the basic material needs of the family. We know there are exceptions to every rule, but in the majority of cases we have seen the damage that is done when the family depends upon the income of both husband and wife. The husband needs to sense his responsibility in this area. we have recommended to many people that when the wife works, the money she makes should be set aside for things not related to basic material needs. Save it for a special vacation or some special items for the house, but don’t depend upon the wife’s income for food, clothes, shelter, etc.

Husbands need their wives to depend upon them, and wives need husbands who are protectors and providers. This emotional interdependency is essential for a good and growing marriage. Circumstances sometimes force us into changes due to illness, unemployment, catastrophe, etc. But as a normal rule, the basic material needs of the family should be the responsibility of the husband/father.

4.13.3.5 Invest Wisely for the Future

Joseph saved for seven years during the time of plenty in order to meet the needs of the population of Egypt during the seven years of famine. That “Joseph principle” is a good one for marriages today. We are “spend-crazy” today! We buy now and pay later. Credit cards have helped us into this problem. Consider the following teachings from the Book of Proverbs.

He who gathers in summer is a son who acts wisely, but he who sleeps in harvest is a son who acts shamefully. (10:5).

A good man leaves an inheritance to his children’s children, and the wealth of the sinner is stored up for the righteous. (13:22)

An inheritance gained hurriedly at the beginning, will not be blessed in the end. (20:21)

Prepare your work outside, and make it ready for yourself in the field; afterwards, then, build your house. (24:27)

He who increases his wealth by interest and usury, gathers it for him who is gracious to the poor. (28:8)

The ants are not a strong folk, but they prepare their food in the summer. (30:25)

These verses (and many more) remind us of the importance of wise investment and careful planning for the future. Watch out for risky investments and promises of immediate success and prosperity! Learn to invest for the future and to guard against the unexpected. Your family needs to have the security of financial support in the case of your disability or death.

One of the great texts on wise investment is found in Ecclesiastes 11:

Cast your bread on the surface of the waters, for you will find it after many days. Divide your portion to seven, or even to eight, for you do not know what misfortune may occur on the earth...Just as you do not know the path of the wind and how bones are formed in the womb of the pregnant woman, so you do not know the activity of God who makes all things. Sow your seed in the morning, and do not be idle in the evening, for you do not know whether morning or evening sowing will succeed, or whether both of them alike will be good.” (11:1-2, 5, 6).

Things like life insurance and health care are fundamental in terms of wise investment. We need to prepare for the unexpected and make sure our families are protected in the case of our death or disability. A will should be made out of every couple, with clear instructions as to the care of the children and the disposition of your resources.

Some of the more risky investments and financial schemes that can hurt you are those that promise a get-rich-quick plan. Beware of anyone who tells you that something is “surefire” or that it “can’t miss!” Seek godly counsel and wisdom from those who love the Lord and are concerned about Biblical principles. Make sure that your motives for financial investments are rooted in God’s plan and instruction. Are you seeking to provide more money for the Lord’s work by your investments?

4.13.3.6 Live by a Budget

A budget is crucial to the handling of financial matters. Many people are in debt because a budget was not designed. A budget helps to control us when we want to spend our money but are not sure whether we can afford to do so. We are amazed at how many married couples spend their money without having a budget. How do they get away with it? Or do they? A budget will bring harmony into your marriage over material things and financial expenditures. When a couple knows the limits of the ability to spend, the emotional conflicts will lessen. If a wife realized how much money she can spend in a given month on groceries and necessities for the house, she will be much more able to live within that marriage with contentment than if she simply does not know what is expected or how much money is in the bank.

Proverbs 27:23-27 says:

Know well the condition of your flocks, and pay attention to your herds; for riches are not forever, nor does a crown endure to all generations. When the grass disappears, the new growth is seen, and the herbs of the mountains are gathered in, the lambs will be for your clothing, and the goats will bring the price of a field, and there will be goats' milk enough for your food, for the food of your household, and sustenance for your maidens.

We definitely need to know what we are doing in this matter of money. Sloppy, haphazard handling of our finances will lead to much marital disharmony. If you do not have a budget, then begin right now to live by one. Make a simple list of your expenditures each month, being careful to add in those annual or semi-annual payments, and then make a simple comparison with your monthly income. How does it look?

4.13.3.7 Don't Worry About Material Things

This heading might amuse you after reading what we have said so far, but it's the truth—don't worry! If you do, other problems will result. Jesus taught us not to be concerned about our needs because our heavenly Father knows them. He will take care of us just like He takes care of the birds and the lilies (Matthew 6:25-34).

Philippians 4:6-7 is good advice:

Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your request be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, shall guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Why worry when you can pray? God knows your needs and He has promised to supply them (Philippians 4:19). In Psalms 37:25 David said, "I have been young, and now I am old; yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken, or his descendants begging bread." What wonderful words! The Lord will take care of us, and we don't need to worry!

We can't offer you a great deal of encouragement if Jesus Christ is not controlling your life, however. Your commitment to Him comes first. He is the only One who can save you from your sins. But you've got to believe in Him for yourself. We can't do it for you. You must personally receive Him as your Lord and Savior, trusting Him alone to save you. If you have not made that commitment as yet, don't wait another day. Do it now!

Your marriage as a believer in Jesus Christ has a great advantage over marriages of those who do not know Him as Savior and Lord. The Bible teaches that the Holy Spirit of God indwells every believer and produces the qualities and attitudes that make our marriages what they ought to be. We need His power controlling our reactions and responses to each other. God has promised to take care of His children, and in spite of the money problems we have, we have no need to worry or to fear.

4.14 Marriage and Family Counseling

The goal of marriage counseling under any circumstance is to help hold the marriage together by improving trust and communication and we agree to honor that requirement throughout our relationship. Oftentimes, however, spouses will pursue marriage counseling as a means to validate their desire to get divorced. This technique relies on ignoring the commitment they made before God to stay married (discussed in sections 4.8.2 and 4.3) and ignores the spiritual aspect of the marriage and its permanence. They will instead find and bribe a credentialed, highly paid, credible "expert" to tell them the marriage is hopeless. By doing so, they will turn the counselor into their advocate, or a source of a "second opinion" as to why they should get divorced, and they will frequently ensure that both spouses don't attend the counseling so the counselor doesn't have the benefit of both sides of the story. This is a devious vehicle for shifting the blame and responsibility for making the relationship work away from them and onto the marriage counselor or worst yet their spouse. This behavior is a product of selfish conceit more than it is of unconditional love.

However, so long as we recognize as married people that love is not a choice or a feeling (see item 3 in section 4.6), but a commandment that God makes to us (Matt. 19:19), then there is no excuse why the marriage can't work other than that the parties are being selfish and rebellious and don't believe in God or honoring his commandments. Recall that rebelliousness was the original sin of Adam and Eve that removed them from fellowship with God. Thus, when Christians get divorced, they in essence have to deny their religious faith in order to do so and become liars in front of God for violating their sacred marriage vows and oaths to "love honor and obey so long as we both shall live."

When we pursue marriage counseling, we therefore agree to abide by the following requirements:

1. We will find a Christian counselor who will honor our common spiritual beliefs, which we acknowledge as the true foundation of our marriage.
2. We will read the entire content of section 4 to the counselor and provide a copy of this entire Family Constitution on our first visit to underscore the common vision and spiritual beliefs that we share for the marriage. We will also print it out and give to him or her.
3. *Both* parties will be informed about and invited to every therapy session pursued by either spouse so the counselor gets two sides of each story. This will promote love, trust, and teamwork in solving the problems within the marriage.
4. The agreed-upon focus of the marriage counseling will be to improve the relationship instead of find ways why it won't work. We will find a different counselor if the counselor insists on ending the

- relationship. The counselor can't be a Christian counselor if they advocate divorce between Christians, or else one of the parties must admit they are not a Christian.
5. We will freely and frequently acknowledge to the counselor that the source of most marital conflicts are selfishness, immaturity, disrespect, and pride. We agree to give the counselor the freedom to point out any of these bad behaviors and attitudes if and when he or she becomes aware of them in us. We also commit ourselves to working very hard to eliminate these bad attitudes and behaviors by using humility, prayer, repentance, forgiveness, and mature love in our dealings with each other.
 6. When we argue, we will remind each other of Philippians 2:3-4 by reading it aloud at the start of a family meeting, family counseling, or family court called to resolve problems: *“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 interest of others.”*

Below is a good quote we agree to read for times when the marriage is having troubles that will encourage us to persevere and be thankful for trials as we are told to do in James 1:2-12:

Sandra felt as low as the heels of her Birkenstocks as she pushed against a November gust and the florist shop door. Her life had been easy, like a spring breeze. Then in the fourth month of her second pregnancy, a minor automobile accident stole her ease. During this Thanksgiving week she would have delivered a son. She grieved her loss.

As if that weren't enough her husband's company threatened a transfer. Then her sister, whose holiday visit she coveted, called saying she could not come. What's worse, Sandra's friend infuriated her by suggesting her grief was a God-given path to maturity that would allow her to empathize with others who suffer. “Had she lost a child? No - she has no idea what I'm feeling,” Sandra shuddered.

Thanksgiving? “Thankful for what?” she wondered. For a careless driver whose truck was hardly scratched when he rear-ended her? For an airbag that saved her life but took that of her child?

“Good afternoon, can I help you?” The flower shop clerk's approach startled Sandra. “Sorry,” said Jenny the shop clerk, “I just didn't want you to think I was ignoring you.”

“I...I need an arrangement.”

“For Thanksgiving?”

Sandra nodded.

“Do you want ‘beautiful but ordinary’, or would like to challenge the day with a customer favorite I call the “Thanksgiving Special?” Jenny saw Sandra's curiosity and continued. “I'm convinced that flowers tell stories, that each arrangement insinuates a particular feeling. Are you looking for something that conveys gratitude this Thanksgiving?”

“Not exactly!” Sandra blurted. “Sorry, but in the last five months, everything that could go wrong has.” Sandra regretted her outburst but was surprised when Jenny said, “I have the perfect arrangement for you.”

The door to the shop once again opened. “Barbara! Hi,” Jenny said. She politely excused herself from Sandra and walked toward a small workroom. She quickly

reappeared carrying a massive arrangement of greenery, bows, and long-stemmed thorny roses. Only, the ends of the rose stems were neatly snipped, no flowers.

“Want this in a box?” Jenny asked. Sandra watched for Barbara’s response. Was this a joke? Who would want rose stems and no flowers! She waited for laughter, for someone to notice the absence of flowers atop the thorny stems, but neither woman did.

“Yes, please. It’s exquisite,” said Barbara. “You’d think after three years of getting the special, I’d not be so moved by its significance, but it’s happening again. My family will love this one. Thanks.”

Why so normal a conversation about such a strange arrangement? She wondered. “Ah,” said Sandra, pointing. “That lady just left with, ah....?”

“Yes?”

“Well, she had no flowers!”

“Right, I cut off the flowers.”

“Off?”

“Off. Yep. That’s the Special. I call it the Thanksgiving Thorns Bouquet.”

“But, why do people pay for that?” In spite of herself, Sandra chuckled.

“Do you really want to know?”

“I couldn’t leave your shop without knowing....I would wonder about nothing else!”

“That might be good,” said Jenny. “Well,” she continued, “Barbara came into the shop three years ago feeling very much like you feel today. She thought she had very little to be thankful for. She had lost her father to cancer. The family business was failing, her son was into drugs, and she faced major surgery.”

“That same year, I lost my husband. I assumed complete responsibility for the shop and for the first time, spent the holidays alone. I had no children, no husband, no family nearby, and too great a debt to allow any travel,” Jenny said.

“What did you do?”

“I learned to be thankful for thorns.”

Sandra’s eyebrows lifted. “Thorns?”

I’m a Christian and I believe God gave us all things in life, but never thought to ask Him why good things happened to me. But, when bad stuff hit, did I ever ask! It took time to learn that dark times are important.

I always enjoyed the ‘flowers’ of life but it took thorns to show me the beauty of God’s comfort. You know, the Bible says that God comforts us when we’re afflicted and from His consolation we learn to comfort others.”

Sandra gasped. "A friend read that passage to me and I was furious! I guess the truth is, I don't want comfort. I've lost a baby and I'm angry with God." She started to ask Jenny to "go on" when the door's bell diverted their attention.

"Hey Phil!" shouted Jenny as a balding, rotund man entered the shop. She softly touched Sandra's arm and moved to welcome him. He tucked her under his side for a warm hug.

"I'm here for twelve thorny long-stemmed stems!" Phil laughed, heartily.

"I figured as much," said Jenny. "I've got them ready." She lifted a tissue-wrapped arrangement from the refrigerated cabinet.

"Beautiful," said Phil. "My wife will love them."

Sandra couldn't help but ask, "These are for your wife?"

Phil saw that Sandra's curiosity matched his when he first heard of a Thorn Bouquet.

"Do you mind me asking, why thorns?"

"In fact, I'm glad you asked," he said. "Four years ago my wife and I nearly divorced. After forty years, we were in a real mess, but we slogged through, problem by rotten problem. We rescued our marriage, our love, really. Last year at Thanksgiving I stopped in here for flowers. I must have mentioned surviving a tough process because Jenny told me that for a long time she kept a vase of rose stems - just the stems - as a reminder of what she learned from "thorny" times. That was good enough for me. I took home stems. My wife and I decided to label each one for a specific thorny situation and give thanks for what the problem taught us. I'm pretty sure this stem review has become a tradition."

Phil paid Jenny, thanked her again and as he left, said to Sandra, "I highly recommend the Special!"

"I don't know if I can be thankful for the thorns in my life." Sandra said to Jenny.

"Well, my experience says that thorns make roses more precious. We treasure God's providential care more during trouble than at any other time. Remember, Jesus wore a crown of thorns so that we might know His love. Do not resent thorns, actually be thankful for them."

Tears rolled down Sandra's cheeks. For the first time since the accident she loosened her grip on resentment. "I'll take twelve long-stemmed thorns, please."

"I hoped you would," Jenny said. "I'll have them ready in a minute. Then, every time you see them, remember to appreciate both good and hard times. We grow through both."

"Thank you. What do I owe you?"

"Nothing. Nothing but a pledge to work toward healing your heart. The first year's arrangement is always on me." Jenny handed a card to Sandra. "I'll attach a card like this to your arrangement but maybe you'd like to read it first. Go ahead, read it."

"My God, I have never thanked You for my thorns! I have thanked You a thousand times for my roses, but never once for my thorns. Teach me

the glory of the cross I bear, teach me the value of my thorns. Show me that I have climbed to You by the path of pain. Show me that my tears have made my rainbow.” George Matheson

Jenny said, “Happy Thanksgiving, Sandra,” handing her the Special. “I look forward to our knowing each other better.”

Sandra smiled. She turned, opened the door and walked toward hope.

4.15 Divorce

4.15.1 What God says about it

There is no question that God hates divorce, because he says so in Malachi 2:16:

For the Lord God of Israel says that he hates divorce.

In Mark 10:2-9, Jesus also says about divorce:

2 *“The Pharisees came and asked Him, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?” testing Him.*

3 *And He answered and said to them “What did Moses command you?”*

4 *They said, “Moses permitted a man to write a certificate of divorce, and to dismiss her.”*

5 *And Jesus answered and said to them, “Because of the hardness of your heart he wrote you this precept.*

6 *But from the beginning of the creation God made them male and female.’*

7 *‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife,*

8 *‘and the two shall become one flesh’; so then they are no longer two, but one flesh.*

9 *“Therefore what God has joined together, let no man separate.”*

10 *In the house his disciples also asked Him again about the same matter.*

11 *So He said to them, “Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her.*

12 *“And if a woman divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery.”*

Therefore, God is saying that divorce among Christians is forbidden and that “hardness of the heart” is behind the divorce problem. It might be safe to say that sin is behind every divorce, regardless of the circumstances. On the other hand, we cannot say that every divorce is sinful. God permits divorce under certain circumstances, even though those circumstances were caused by sin. For instance, divorce and/or remarriage is righteous and allowed by God for the following five cases:

1. There has been sexual immorality or adultery (Matt. 5:31-32).
2. One’s spouse has died. (Rom. 7:2-3)
3. A believer is married to an unbelieving spouse and the unbelieving spouse departs the house. (1 Cor. 7:15).
4. When the marriage and divorce occurred prior to salvation. (2 Corinthians 5:17). When God promises the passing away of "old things," it surely includes divorce prior to salvation. After all, being alienated from God and at enmity with Him, how could any unbeliever possibly know His will regarding the choice of a lifetime mate? This falls within the context of God's superabundant grace to wipe our slate clean when we turn, by faith, to Christ the Lord.
5. Either spouse refuses to submit sexually to the to the other spouse. This is because the outcome of not submitting is lustful thoughts, usually by the husband, toward other women, which leads to "adultery of the mind" as described by Jesus in Matt. 5:27-28. Since adultery is also a basis for divorce, as indicated in Matt. 5:31-32, then technically, refusal to submit sexually is a grounds for divorce! See section 4.8.5.2: The Four Fundamental Laws of Sexual Satisfaction In Marriage for further details.

If Christians divorce and/or remarry for any reason other than those above, then the Bible clearly says they have committed sin and are, in effect, denying their faith.

4.15.2 What Kids Should Do If Their Parents are Divorced

The following provides a simple list to document how children should act who are from divorced parents that are living apart.

1. Your relationship to each of your parents is separate and special.
2. It is okay to say, "I don't want to talk about it," if one of your parents asks you about your other parent.
3. It is important to tell your parent, counselor, or an adult you trust about anything that hurts, confuses, or bothers you, even when it is dad or mom you have to talk about.
4. It is not a parent's business to know anything about the other parent's life when they are no longer together.
5. It is not okay for one parent to ask you details about your other parent's life.
6. You do not have to answer a parent's questions about the other parent, as for instance the following: 'What is your mom or dad] doing? Who does she [or he] talk to? What does she [or he] say? What does she [or he] wear?'
7. You can say, "Never mind."
8. You can say, "I don't want to talk about it."

4.15.3 Statistics on Divorce

The following alarming statistics are meant to show how devastating divorce can be on children and how to successfully lessen its impact. Divorce is a VERY serious and life-altering process that has

profound consequences and should be considered only as an extreme measure. No parent who loves their child and puts their child's welfare above their own would get a divorce if they were familiar with all of the following statistics.

1. Father-absence associated with divorce and sole maternal custody outcomes (expressed in diagnostic terms as the “paternal deficit”), is the primary predictor of many very serious problems for children, including:³²

- 1.1. A 72% increase in the overall likelihood that a white teenage girl will become a single mother and a 100% increase for black teenage girls, with other studies reporting up to a 600% increase in teenage illegitimate births.
- 1.2. A 77% to 100% increase in the overall likelihood that a teenage boy will father an illegitimate child.
- 1.3. A twofold increase that a child, particularly a boy, will become a delinquent.
- 1.4. An 86% increase in the likelihood that a child will become a psychotic delinquent.
- 1.5. A threefold increase in the likelihood that a child will be involved in gang activity.
- 1.6. Presidential assassinations: Every Presidential assassination or attempted assassination has been by a male reared absent a father.
- 1.7. Up to 80% of rapists, motivated by varying psychological disorders.
- 1.8. A 200% increase in attempted or successful teen suicides.
- 1.9. A significant increase in the likelihood of homosexual behavior in males as well as females.
- 1.10. A significant increase in child sex-role conflicts, and a 100% correlation with gender identity disorders.
- 1.11. A significant decrease in school performance, a significant increase in disruptive school behavior; a significant decrease in performance on aptitude tests, in cognitive skills, in terms of grades, and is cumulative in nature; and predicts truancy and grade repetition.
- 1.12. A 200% increase in the likelihood that a child will require psychological treatment.
- 1.13. Low self-esteem in both girls and boys.
- 1.14. Difficulty for girls in building a stable family life in adulthood.
- 1.15. A substantial increase in men's odds of ending up in the lowest occupational stratum.
- 1.16. Fatal child abuse by mothers.
- 1.17. Child sexual abuse.
2. The assumption that younger children benefit from sole maternal custody outcomes rising from the “primary caretaker” doctrine is particularly false. Father-absence before the age of four or five appear to have a more disruptive effect on the child's personality development than does father-absence beginning at a later period.³³
3. Father-absence is the greatest social problem we face. It not only hurts the futures of children, but it places irreconcilable burdens on state agencies and the courts to act as substitute husband, father, mother, mediator, family, and wage earner.³⁴
4. Family Court Services Recommendations: Judge Thomas Ashworth of the San Diego Family Court said he and his colleagues accept the recommendations from the counselors more than 80 percent of the time. Their courtrooms are swamped with cases, so they prefer to rely on the expertise of the counselors. Disappointed parents call that “rubber-stamping.”³⁵

³² 1993 Gender Bias Task Force Report, Study of 2,778 divorces in St. Louis county. <http://acfc.org/study/mocourts.pdf>; pp 9-10.

³³ Ibid, page 10.

³⁴ Ibid, page 10.

³⁵ “Judgement Daze”, John Wilkens, San Diego Union Tribune, Oct 20, 1997.

5. San Diego Family Court Custody Ruling Statistics: No statistics are compiled on the outcome of custody orders, but Chavez-Fallon said she looked at three months' worth of cases not too long ago and found this split: 30 percent of decisions are for joint physical custody with children dividing their time evenly in both parents' homes; 50 percent of the time, children are sent to live with the mother and visit the father; and 20 percent of the decisions have children live with dad and visit the mom.³⁶
6. Waiting list for Family Court Services Mediation in San Diego: The waiting period now for a case to be assigned a Family Court Services counselor is four weeks. Hiring more counselors won't happen unless there's more money in the budget for it.³⁷
7. Divorce Hurts Women: How has no-fault divorce hurt women? A new phenomenon has resulted from no-fault divorce laws: what commentators have called "the feminization of poverty ." The rate of child poverty, for example, is five times higher for children living with single mothers than for children in intact families. In 1992, 53.4% of female-headed households with children subsisted below the poverty line, compared with only 10.7% of all other families with children. Studies show a drop in income for both women and men, noting that women experience an income decline of about 30 percent while the divorced male will experience about a 10 percent drop in income. <http://www.rmfc.org/resf571.html>
8. Divorce Hurts Fathers: Not only does no-fault divorce hurt women, divorce hurts men. The image of the successful professional man who leaves his faithful wife and children and runs off with his pretty young secretary is well ingrained in our national mind. The devastated wife and children are left to pick up the pieces. But is the grass really greener for the roaming father? No. Premature death rates for divorced men are double that of married men from such causes as cardiovascular disease, hypertension, and strokes. The premature death rate from pneumonia is seven times larger for divorced men than for married men. The suicide rate for divorced white men is four times higher than for their married counterparts. Divorced or separated men undergo inpatient or outpatient psychiatric care at a rate 10 times that of married men. Divorce thus hurts fathers' relationship with their children, and may prove dangerous and even fatal physically and emotionally. <http://www.rmfc.org/resf571.html>
9. Divorce Hurts Children: Studies have shown that children from disrupted marriages experience greater risk of injury, asthma, headaches, and speech defects than children from intact families. Suicide rates for children of divorce are much higher than for children from intact families. Children from disrupted marriages are over 70 percent more likely than those living with both biological parents to have been expelled or suspended from school. Delinquency rates are 10 to 15 percent higher in broken homes than in intact ones. Children whose parents have divorced are much more likely to drop out of school, to engage in premarital sex, and to become pregnant themselves outside of marriage. <http://www.rmfc.org/resf441.html>
10. Religion is Good for Marriage: Religious commitment has been shown to have a positive affect on marriage. "Several studies have demonstrated that regular church attenders have lower divorce rates than non-attenders,"³⁸ and that it isn't because of religion-based prohibitions against divorce. To the contrary, church attenders were simply found to be "happier with their marriages. This proved to be true even when investigators used special techniques to detect whether people were [responding truthfully]." Furthermore, it was found that the elevated sense of marital satisfaction among church attenders extended to their sexual relationship, a finding that "flies in the face of the prevailing wisdom, which portrays religion as being negative toward sex. " Along with these

³⁶ "Judgement Daze", John Wilkens, San Diego Union Tribune, Oct 20, 1997.

³⁷ "Judgement Daze", John Wilkens, San Diego Union Tribune, Oct 20, 1997.

³⁸ See Larson, D.B., "Religious involvement," in G. Rekers (Ed.) *Family Building* (Regal, Ventura, CA, 1985) p. 121-147.

findings, researchers have also found religious commitment to be associated with lower levels of drug abuse, alcoholism and juvenile delinquency. It is clear that religious commitment results in physical, mental and even marital health; there are even eternal benefits!

<http://www.rmfc.org/resf431.html>

11. Religion is Good for Children's and Parent's Health: New research demonstrates that religion is good for your health. For example, in 1987 University of Texas researchers "carefully examined 27 studies on church attendance and health." ³⁹ Their analysis revealed that in all but seven studies, "frequent church attenders were healthier as a group than less frequent attenders." In fact, researchers went so far as to suggest that "infrequent religious attendance should be regarded as a consistent risk factor for morbidity and mortality of various types." Researcher David Larson, in a study on men's blood pressure, found that "even smokers benefited from religion." Larson found that smokers who were not religious "were seven times more likely to have abnormal... [blood]... pressure than those who said [religion] was important." "In fact, smokers who attended church had the same blood pressure as non-smokers who did not." These findings led Larson to the conclusion that "if you're going to smoke, make sure you go to church." <http://www.rmfc.org/resf431.html>
12. In 1991, 54 percent of all poor families were maintained by women with no husband present. Among poor black families, 78.3 percent were maintained by women with no husband present, and for families of Hispanic origin, the comparable figure was 45.7 percent (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1992). <http://garnet.berkeley.edu:3333/faststats/povertystats.html>
13. The United States has the highest proportion of single- parent families; nearly one child in four now lives with one parent (Hobbs, F., & Lippman, L., 1990). <http://garnet.berkeley.edu:3333/faststats/povertystats.html>
14. In 1991, the poverty rate among children in female-headed families was 55 percent, more than five times the rate among married-couple families (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1992). <http://garnet.berkeley.edu:3333/faststats/povertystats.html>
15. Being a woman increases one's chances of being poor by 60 percent. If one is also black or Hispanic and has a work history of being poorly paid, the chances of falling below the government's poverty threshold escalates. Nearly three- quarters (72 percent) of all the poor over age 65 are women (Older Women's League, 1988).
16. Early childhood experiences contribute to poor children's high rate of school failure, dropout, delinquency, early childbearing, and adult poverty (National Center for Children in Poverty, 1990). <http://garnet.berkeley.edu:3333/faststats/povertystats.html>
17. One-quarter of all American children are born out of wedlock, and 40 percent of them will live in a single-parent family before they reach their 18th birthday (Special Report, Business Week, 1988). <http://garnet.berkeley.edu:3333/faststats/povertystats.html>
18. The most accurate predictor of a child's future is poverty. Stuck at the bottom of the economic ladder, poor women and men raise children in landscapes devoid of opportunity. "Research shows again and again that poverty and unemployment can more reliably predict who will marry, divorce, or commit and suffer domestic violence than can the best-tuned measure of values yet devised," writes Judith Stacey, a social scientist at U.C.-Davis. <http://www.cuttingloose.com/med.html>
19. Poverty rates decrease dramatically as years of school completed increases: in 1991 the poverty rate was 24.2 percent for householders who had not completed high school, 10.5 percent for those who had graduated from high school but not attended college, and 6.5 percent for those with 1 or more years of college (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1992). <http://garnet.berkeley.edu:3333/faststats/povertystats.html>

³⁹ Levin, J.S. and Vanderpool, H.Y., "Is frequent religious attendance really conducive to better health?: Toward an epidemiology of religion," *Social Science Medicine*, 24(7):589-600, 1987.

20. Poverty is associated with social circumstances that influence health. These may include limited parental education, extramarital births or single parenthood, adolescent parenthood, and, for minority groups, racial or ethnic discrimination. These economic and social burdens can engender feelings of despair and powerlessness that hinder healthy behavior (Klerman, L.V., & Parker, M., 1991). <http://garnet.berkeley.edu:3333/faststats/povertystats.html>
21. In California, 55% of all marriages end in divorce.
22. During the period from 1970 to 1990, the advent of no-fault divorce laws throughout the United states increased the divorce rates by 34 percent.⁴⁰ California needs to go back to fault-based divorce once again, where at least adultery and sexual immorality are considered as criteria for getting divorce.
23. Research suggests that after more than two decades of widespread dissolution of marriage, children of divorce are *not* as well off as those who grow up in intact families. According to the Family Research Council:⁴¹
 - 23.1. Three out of four teen suicides are committed by adolescents from broken homes.
 - 23.2. Children of divorce are 70 percent more likely to have been expelled from school and are twice as likely to drop out of school, compared to their peers who are in intact families.
 - 23.3. Seven out of ten preteens and teenagers in long-term correctional facilities come from broken homes.
24. A comprehensive analysis known as the California Children of Divorce Study found that more than a third of the children studied were dealing with moderate to severe depression five years after their parents' divorce. According to Wallerstein, almost all of the adolescent girls in the study "confronted issues of love, commitment, and marriage with anxiety, sometimes with very great concern about betrayal, abandonment, and not being loved."⁴²
25. A seventy-year longevity study reported in the American Journal of Public Health in 1995 indicated that individuals who were younger than twenty-one years of age when their parents divorced were likely to have a shorter life span than those whose families remained intact.
26. Approximately 40% of fathers have no contact with their father whatsoever following divorce. This phenomenon is explained in part by the fact that it is so painful for non-custodial dads to not be able to spend more time with their children because the courts won't allow them more. As a matter of fact, 80-90% of the dads are non-custodial dads who aren't allowed by the courts to share physical custody of the children with the mother and who usually end of seeing their children no more than once every two weeks. In some cases, this bias by the courts and the pain it creates has the effect has the effect of causing fathers to want to leave their children entirely to avoid the pain and the lack of empowerment they feel over the situation.⁴³

God is able to heal the broken pieces of your marriage, and by His love and forgiveness can restore the flame of love and desire between you and your partner. When real confession and repentance take place, along with true acceptance and forgiveness, the marriage can be restored and the level of happiness can become greater than you have ever known!

Jesus Christ taught us to forgive, but He also recognizes the serious effect of sexual immorality on the strength of the bond of the marriage. He has no words of condemnation to the partner who divorces because the other partner committed sexual sin. He allows it. He is not encouraging it, but only

⁴⁰ Baby and Child Care, Paul C. Reisser, M.D., 1997; Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.; p. 449.

⁴¹ Baby and Child Care, Paul C. Reisser, M.D., 1997; Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.; pp. 449-450.

⁴² Baby and Child Care, Paul C. Reisser, M.D., 1997; Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.; p. 450.

⁴³ Focus on the Family Radio Program, Dr. James Dobson, August 29, 2000.

showing us that He understands and is willing to permit a divorce in such cases. But the higher standard that He would encourage us to consider is that of repentance, forgiveness, and restoration.⁴⁴

We also should remember that:

“The leading cause of divorce is marriage.”

Therefore, we should be VERY careful who we choose as mates, because we only get once chance!

4.16 The Humorous Side of Marriage

4.16.1 Women’s Rules for Relationships

For those of you who don't already know, these are the rules that are in effect in every relationship.

1. The female always makes the rules.
2. These rules are subject to change at any time without prior notification.
3. No male can possibly know all the rules.
4. If the female suspects that the male knows all the rules, she must immediately change some or all of the rules.
5. The female is never wrong.
6. If the female is wrong, it is because of a vagrant misunderstanding which was a direct result of something the male said or did wrong.
7. If rule number 6 applies, the male must immediately apologize for causing the misunderstanding.
8. The female can change her mind at any given point in time.
9. The male must never change his mind without express written consent of the female.
10. The female has every right to be angry or upset at any time.
11. The male must remain calm at all times, unless the female wants him to be angry or upset.
12. The female must under no circumstances let the male know whether she wants him to be calm, angry or upset.
13. Any attempt to document these rules could result in bodily harm.
14. The female always gets the last word!

(*) These rules are subject to change as the female sees fit. All rules are null and void under the PMS Exception Law

4.16.2 Men’s Rules for Relationships

1. Learn to work the toilet seat; if it's up, put it down.
2. Don't cut your hair. Ever.
3. Don't make us guess. We're not mind readers and never will be.
4. If you ask a question you don't want an answer to, expect an answer you don't want to hear.
5. Sometimes, he's not thinking about you. Live with it.
6. He's never thinking about "The Relationship."
7. Get rid of your cat. And no, it's not different, its just like every other cat.

⁴⁴ Good Marriages Take Time. Bad Marriages Take More Time, David and Carole Hocking, ISBN 0-939497-40-9, Promise Publishing Co., 1996, p. 183.

8. Dogs are better than cats.
9. Anything you wear is fine. Really.
10. Shopping is not everybody's idea of a good time.
11. You have enough clothes.
12. You have too many shoes.
13. Crying is blackmail. Use it if you must, but don't expect us to like it.
14. Ask for what you want. Subtle hints don't work.
15. No, he doesn't know what day it is. He never will. Mark anniversaries on the calendar.
16. Share the bathroom.
17. Share the closet.
18. Yes and no are perfectly acceptable answers.
19. A headache that lasts for 17 months is a problem. See a doctor.
20. Nothing says "I love you" like sex in the morning.
21. Check your oil.
22. We DID water the plants. They died anyway. Nobody knows why this happens.
23. If you must take us with you into Victoria's Secret, never, ever leave us alone. All the old fat ladies make mean faces at us and only add to our discomfort.
24. Sex on a weeknight is generally welcome. Three hours of post-coital conversation is not.
25. Compromise does not mean that we abandon our position in favor of yours.
26. If we see you in the morning and at night, why call us at work?
27. Butthead is the smart one.
28. Is it too much to ask to have the bra match the underwear?
29. You probably don't want to know what we're thinking about.
30. Silence does not need to be filled with discussions about "us" and "the relationship."
31. Things you can help with: the Sunday crossword, yard work, the dishes, cleaning, and grocery shopping.
32. Socks never constitute a gift.
33. Withdrawing sex, affection, or communication to get one's way in a relationship is blackmail. Don't even think about doing this because we don't like it.
34. Department stores and malls were designed so that when you want to look at bed linen, shower curtains or handbags, there are always some speakers, tires or sporting equipment nearby.
35. We don't know anything about handbags. Don't even ask.

4.16.3 Marriage Dictionary

Bachelor:

- 1) A guy who has avoided the opportunity to make some woman miserable.
- 2) A guy who is footloose and fiance-free.
- 3) A man who every morning comes to work from a different direction.
- 4) A man who never makes the same mistake once.
- 5) A nice guy who has cheated some nice girl out of her alimony.
- 6) A person who believes in life, liberty, and the happiness of pursuit.
- 7) A selfish guy who has cheated some woman out of a divorce.
- 8) The only man who has never told his wife a lie.

Bride: A woman with a fine prospect of happiness behind her.

Bridegroom: A gent who exchanges living quarters for a better half.

Cad: A man who doesn't tell his wife that he's sterile until she's pregnant.

Childish game: One at which your spouse beats you.

Compromise: An amiable arrangement between husband and wife whereby they agree to let her have her own way.

Diplomat: A man who can convince his wife she would look stout in a fur coat.

Domestic harmony: A condition brought about when the husband plays second fiddle and yet pays the piper.

Engagement: A call to arms; hence as day follows night, divorce is disarmament.

Gentleman:

- 1) A husband who steadies the stepladder so that his wife will not fall while she paints the ceiling.
- 2) A man who, when his wife drops her knitting, kicks it over to her so that she can easily pick it up.

Grand Slam Event: The honeymoon.

Housework: What the wife does that nobody notices until she doesn't do it.

Husband:

- 1) A man who buys his football tickets four months in advance and waits until December 24 to do his Christmas shopping.
- 2) A man who gives up privileges he never realized he had.
- 3) A man who stands by his wife in troubles she'd never have had if she didn't marry him.
- 4) A person who thinks he is the boss of the house, but in reality, houses the boss.
- 5) A person who is the boss of his house and has his wife's permission to say so.

Joint Checking Account: A handy little device which permits your wife to beat you to the draw.

LOVE: An obsessive delusion that is cured by MARRIAGE.

Marital Freedom: The liberty that allows a husband to do exactly that which his wife pleases.

Matrimony: A knot tied by a preacher, but untied by a lawyer.

Miss: A title with which we brand unmarried women to indicate that they are in the market.

Mistress: Something between a mister and a mattress.

Mother-in-Law: A woman who destroys her son-in-law's peace of mind by giving him a piece of hers.

Mrs: A job title involving heavy duties, light earnings, and no recognition.

Nuns: Women who marry god. If they divorce Him, do they get half the universe?

Old Maid: A critical reflection on every bachelor.

Sex drive: A physical craving that begins in adolescence and ends at MARRIAGE.

Shotgun wedding: A case of wife or death.

Spinster: A bachelor's wife.

Spouse: Someone who will stand by you through all the trouble you wouldn't have had if you'd stayed single in the first place.

Visionary: Marrying a man with intentions of changing and reforming him.

Wedding Ring: The world's smallest handcuffs.

Wedlock: The deep, deep peace of the double bed after the hurly-burly of the chaise-lounge.

Wife:

- 1) A mate who is forever complaining about not having anything to wear at the very same time that she complains about not having enough room in the closet.
- 2) The perfect acquisition for any gentleman feeling himself to have excessive control over his personal affairs.

Widow: A woman who can find no fault with her husband.

Widowhood: The only compensation some women get out of a marriage.

4.16.4 Letter to my Wife/Husband

To My Dear Wife,

During the past year, I have tried to make love to you 365 times. I have succeeded 12 times. The following list is why I didn't succeed often.

1. The sheets are clean.54 times
2. It is too late.17 times
3. Too tired from shopping all day. 49 times
4. It is too early. 20 times
5. It is too hot. 15 times
6. Pretending to be asleep. 15 times
7. The neighbors will hear us.3 times
8. Headache.22 times
9. Sunburn. 7 times
10. Your Mother will hear us.9 times

11. Not in the mood. 43 times
12. You will wake the baby. 17 times
13. Watching the late show. 6 times
14. New Hairdo. 5 times
15. Too sore. 16 times
16. Wrong time of month. 36 times
17. Have to get up early. 19 times

Of the 12 times I did succeed, the activity was not satisfactory because 2 times you just laid there, 4 times you reminded me that there was a crack in the ceiling, 3 times you told me to hurry up and get it over with, 2 times I had to wake you up to tell you that I had finished, and once I was afraid I had hurt you because I felt you move.

To My Dear Husband,

I think that you have gotten things a little confused. Here are the real reasons you did not get it more often than you did.

1. Came home drunk and tried to screw the cat. 15 times
2. Did not come home at all. 36 times
3. Did not come. 21 times
4. Came too soon. 33 times
5. Went soft before you got it in. 33 times
6. Toes cramped. 10 times
7. Working too late. 38 times
8. Have to get up early to play golf. 29 times
9. Had a fight and someone kicked you in the balls. . . 2 times
10. Caught Herman in your zipper. 4 times
11. Caught a cold and your nose kept running. 3 times
12. Burned your tongue on hot coffee. 3 times
13. You had a splinter in your finger. 2 times
14. Came in your PJ's while reading a dirty book. . . . 16 times
15. Watching football on TV. 98 times
16. Hemorrhoids flared up. 10 times

Of the times we did get together, the reason I laid still was because you were screwing the sheets. I wasn't talking about the crack in the ceiling. What I said was, would you prefer me on my back or kneeling. The time you felt me move was because you farted and I was trying to breathe!!

4.16.5 Quotes on Marriage

1. "MARRIAGE is a great institution. I'm just not ready for an institution."
2. "I recently read that LOVE is entirely a matter of chemistry. That must be why my wife treats me like toxic waste." -David Bissonette
3. "I've sometimes thought of marrying, and then I've thought again." -Noel Coward, 1956

4. "When a man steals your wife, there is no better revenge than to let him keep her." -Sacha Guitry
5. "Eighty percent of married men cheat in America. The rest cheat in Europe." Jackie Mason
6. "MARRIAGE is like a cage; one sees the birds outside desperate to get in, and those inside desperate to get out." -Montaigne
7. "After MARRIAGE, husband and wife become two sides of a coin; they just can't face each other, but still they stay together." -Hemant Joshi
8. "MARRIAGE is a three-ring circus: engagement ring, wedding ring, and suffering. "
9. "MARRIAGE is not a word; it is a sentence. "
10. "MARRIAGE is the triumph of imagination over intelligence. "
11. "Second MARRIAGE is the triumph of hope over experience. "
12. "MARRIAGE is when a man and woman become as one; the trouble starts when they try to decide which one. "
13. "Before MARRIAGE, a man yearns for the woman he loves. After MARRIAGE, the 'Y' becomes silent. "
14. "If you want your spouse to listen and pay strict attention to every word you say, talk in your sleep."
15. Getting married is very much like going to a continental restaurant with friends. You order what you want, then when you see what the other fellow has, you wish you had ordered that.
17. At the cocktail party, one woman said to another, "Aren't you wearing your wedding ring on the wrong finger?" The other replied, "Yes I am , I married the wrong man."
18. Man is incomplete until he is married. then he is really finished.
19. A little boy asked his father, "Daddy, how much does it cost to get married?" and the father replied, "I don't know son, I'm still paying for it."
20. Marriage is an institution in which a man loses his bachelor's degree and the woman gets her master's.
21. Young son: "Is it true, Dad, I heard that in some parts of Africa a man doesn't know his wife until he marries her?" Dad: "That happens in most countries, son."
22. Then there was a man who said, "I never knew what real happiness was until I got married; and then it was too late."
23. A happy marriage is a matter of give and take; the husband gives and the wife takes.

24. When a newly married man looks happy we know why. When a TO-BE married man looks happy we ALL know why. But when a ten-year married man looks happy - We wonder WHY.

25. Married life is very frustrating. In the first year of marriage, the man speaks and the woman listens. In the second year, the woman speaks and the man listens. In the third year, they both speak and the neighbors listen.

26. After a quarrel, a wife said to her husband, "You know, I was a fool when I married you." and the husband replied, "Yes, dear, but I was in love and didn't notice it."

27. It doesn't matter how often a married man changes his job, he still ends up with the same boss.

28. A man inserted an "ad" in the classifieds: "Wife wanted." Next day he received a hundred letters. They all said the same thing: "You can have mine."

29. When a man opens the door of his car for his wife, you can be sure of one thing: either the car is new or the wife.

30. A perfect wife is one who helps the husband with the dishes.

31. A woman was telling her friend, "It is I who made my husband a millionaire." "And what was he before you married him," asked the friend. Woman replied, "A multi-millionaire."

4.16.6 The Five Kinds Of Sex

The first is Smurf Sex. This happens during the honeymoon; you both keep doing it until you're blue in the face.

The second is Kitchen Sex. This is at the beginning of the marriage; you'll have sex anywhere, anytime. Including the kitchen.

The third kind is Bedroom Sex. You've calmed down a bit, perhaps have kids, so you've got to do it in the bedroom.

The fourth kind is Hallway Sex. This is where you pass each other in the hallway and say, "Screw you!"

There is also a fifth kind of sex: Courtroom Sex. This is when you get divorced and your wife screws you in front of everyone in the court.

4.16.7 Marriage as Slavery⁴⁵

History teaches that spiritual, mental, and physical slavery is the natural state of man. Freedom, like a garden, must be constantly tended. Vigilance, always the price of liberty, is highly recommended

⁴⁵ The Predatory Female; Reverend Lawrence Shannon, Banner Books, Inc., 1989, ISBN 0-9615938-0-6, pp. 79-80.

where the predatory female is concerned. Marriage is a form of slavery, even for the predatory, and with its tricky packaging, very dangerous.

Women are not to blame for the ruin of millions of men through the marriage mill. The astounding fact is that men have, of their own free wills, chosen this path to destruction. Like Adam in the Garden, they picked slavery over the prospect of being alone. They have been led, en masse, by the genitals, chortling and gurgling like morons, to their own damnation. They must wear the ball and chain of holy matrimony and eventually accept that they are no longer the masters of their homes or futures. Most have little chance of ever being deprogrammed.

4.16.8 Tips for the Marriage Minded⁴⁶

Q: Can you list some points for the marriage-minded to think about and beware of prior to marriage?

A: Don't even give marriage the remotest consideration unless you are willing to accept:

- Being a guest in your own home.
- Losing your pension.
- Living with the constant threat of alimony.
- Paying \$75.00 for a bar of soap shaped like a frog.
- Knowing that between fifty and ninety cents of every dollar you make legally belongs to your wife.
- Waking up twenty five years from now with a creature that shares few if any interests with you-- but controls your estate.
- Knowing that your children can be taken from you at any time and used to legally extort money from you that far exceeds their support costs.
- Being just another member of the vast army of subservient worker-drones in the matriarchal society.
- Supporting a large cast of doctors and lawyers.
- Having someone else decide how you are going to spend your money, your vacations, and your energy.

The fact is, you show me a married man and I'll show you a man who's been hustled. Essentially, marriage (in America) is the handing of a rubber mallet to a selected woman, placing your balls on an anvil, and instructing her to take a swing any time she's so inclined. If you subsequently decide there is something patently one sided about the arrangement, the courts will encourage her to take numerous parting swings as you default. Further, you may be ordered to subject yourself, once per month, to other ritualistic hammerings (like sending her a large check, drawn on your account).

4.16.9 The Marriage License⁴⁷

Almost any dangerous act, potentially hazardous to individuals and involving the government, requires a license. Of course, there is a fee. The license officially invites the state into your relationship with the bride and obligates you to a plethora of responsibilities, much of which is not understood even by experts. This results in a tidal wave of daily litigation across the nation.

⁴⁶ The Predatory Female; Reverend Lawrence Shannon, Banner Books, Inc., 1989, ISBN 0-9615938-0-6, pp. 85-87.

⁴⁷ The Predatory Female; Reverend Lawrence Shannon, Banner Books, Inc., 1989, ISBN 0-9615938-0-6, pp. 78-79.

The licenses are usually sold at courthouses because it's convenient for the state and helps familiarize you with the building that may become your second home during your divorce. More than half of the licensees return as disolvees within a few years.

The license has certain requirements. Generally you pay the fee and present evidence of a blood test. You volunteer to become a human pin cushion for some state recognized physician. In the name of the state, he draws your blood. This ritual, reeking with symbolism, is one of the last subtle warnings to the prospective groom. It invariably goes unappreciated.

4.16.10 The Lifetime Haircut⁴⁸

The predatory female is like Delilah. This is because the predatory female has a propensity for weakening the man. This is an ongoing occurrence in any relationship, but marriage provides an ideal setting for the gradual siphoning of his strength. A woman can cause so much needless anxiety in a man that his health suffers. He may become nervous, irritable, and develop heart trouble. Her enfeebling maneuvers provide her with a fiendish, subconscious satisfaction. The crippling effects of marriage, on men, are well known to her. A married man often acts more subdued and quiet when in the presence of his wife. She'll sap his strength, gradually wearing him down over the years in thousands of little, cumulative ways, until she's the stronger. Years of taking out the trash and picking up dog shit, among countless other indignities, finally break his spirit. The biblical account of Samson and Delilah is germane to the male versus the predatory female today. The cunning subtleties of the predatory female in the acquisitive mode are extremely dangerous, ergo Delilah cajoles Samson into revealing the secret of his strength. Later, like the man lured into marriage, Samson was unaware his strength had gone. He became a captive, was ridiculed, and finally destroyed himself.

4.16.11 The Husband as Anti-Hero⁴⁹

For years it's been fashionable to portray the husband as a bumbling, subservient mental retard, especially in motion pictures and television. On TV sitcoms, the married man is often the subject of constant ridicule from the wife and her friends as he does one stupid thing after another. Sometimes he's a bigot, at others he's shown up by his wife or kids. The undertone is that the husband is a non-contributor, a problem, or a stumbling block. In commercials he is shown by his wife and a female real estate agent how they really can afford the new house, whereupon he goes bounding around the front yard like a moron. Or they might show him making a total disaster of dinner on the night he is left alone with the children. The unspoken message is that when the chips are down, it's the wife or another female that knew all along what was best. Conversely, when a real hero appears, he is most often single. How would Superman, The Lone Ranger, James Bond, or even Jesus Christ have come off as a married man? The answer is: terrible. Married men are hard to sell as heroes. A picture of James Bond trying to placate a shrieking wife while she threatens to have his wages garnished doesn't fit the hero image. A married man is a cornered man. He is a man who has lost something, and this makes it hard for him to be the classic, free thinking, and independent hero.

4.16.12 How the Predatory Female Uses Guilt to Manipulate Males⁵⁰

⁴⁸ The Predatory Female; Reverend Lawrence Shannon, Banner Books, Inc., 1989, ISBN 0-9615938-0-6, pp. 72.

⁴⁹ The Predatory Female; Reverend Lawrence Shannon, Banner Books, Inc., 1989, ISBN 0-9615938-0-6, pp. 75-76.

⁵⁰ The Predatory Female; Reverend Lawrence Shannon, Banner Books, Inc., 1989, ISBN 0-9615938-0-6, pp. 80-81.

Guilt is one of the predatory female's most powerful tools. With guilt, she keeps her victims on the defensive. She uses it on males from a young age, at the outset of dating, to control them. She is surprised at how eagerly they accept this charade. She makes them feel guilty about simply wanting sex, a basic, primal urge. Once successful at that, the pattern is set. Cultivating a habit of making men feel apologetic about their wants, sexual or otherwise, she assumes the aristocrat role--expecting things done for her--and silently demands that her male companion take the role of butler, chauffeur, valet, and financial benefactor. The male, while simultaneously suffering from a guilt trip and nurturing a sniveling desire to get laid, is delighted to pick up the tab. Often this process continues until she has him backed into a psychological corner where he sees his only redemption as marriage. Her acceptance of his proposal is a pardon from his guilt feelings and somehow justifies, in his confused mind, the indignities he's suffered for occasional sexual rewards. Both the predatory female and organized religion have used guilt as a method of control for thousands of years.