

For the Love of the Family Ministries™
Missionaries to America's Forgotten Mission Field, the Family
For the Love of the Family™ Series
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How to Build and Have a Godly Marriage

Ephesians 5:21-33 "Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God. Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word. That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church: For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church. Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband."

I believe that this message is very much needed. When I marry people I spend three sessions with them, counseling them in regard to establishing a Biblical marriage. Divorce is very common in our country. In most areas well over 50 percent of all marriages end in divorce. Seventy-five percent of all second marriages end in divorce. Many homes, lives, and children are being destroyed and God hates it, Malachi 2:14-16, Mark 10:2-11. In the community that our church is in only 20 percent of the people are married. Most of the 20 percent are divorced and remarried. What a tragedy! This is not just unsaved people; there

are many Christians who end up in the divorce court. I want to hit on some positive things and I hope they will help you.

There are six points the Bible brings out concerning marriage, which I believe, are very important to have a successful marriage. There are many people living together today (in marriage and outside marriage), but that does not mean they are happy or even understand the things God wants for them.

Six Biblical Keys to Marital Happiness

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| 1. Maturity | 2. Submission | 3. Love |
| 4. Communication | 5. Prayer | 6. Christ |

I believe the degree to which you use these Biblical keys will determine the success of your marriage. If you neglect them, your marriage cannot help but be a miserable and disastrous experience. Marriage can be the most happy, mediocre, or unhappy of life's experiences. God designed the appropriate sexes to compliment each other. He wants a man and woman to be joined in marriage so that they might each give to the other what each one lacked. These differences that can complete and blend two unique individuals into one or the differences can make people be incompatible, divide and cause separation instead of oneness. The daily parts and pieces of marriage do not automatically fall into place as the romantic glamour of Hollywood indicates. Loving and living with your partner takes daily determination, patience, and the giving of our self for the good of the other. Many marriages are nothing more than a war.

Several years ago, I was called to a home in the middle of the night where a man and a woman were fighting. He had hit her and she hauled off and bloodied his mouth. By the time I arrived, blood was every where and I had to get into the middle and try to get each one to the corner of the room. I asked, "What is going on here?" She said, "Pastor, he hit me and I hit him back!" He was a Vietnam veteran, but she did the damage that evening. Personally, if it came right down to it I think she could have taken him! Obviously, he did not know how to treat her and she was responding to ill treatment. It was a miserable home and a miserable experience trying to get them to go from throwing each other around to see how God wanted them to respond to each other.

Since God created man and woman for each other it follows that the best advice on marriage is in the Bible. God planned marriage for man's good. Genesis 2:18 "And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a help meet for him." Genesis 2:23-24 "And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh." God planned for a man and woman to be more than mates. He planned for them to be helpmates.

Here is where the secret of a happy marriage is. If all two people have in common is the “mating urge”; theirs will always be an inadequate relationship scarcely more satisfying than the relationship of animals. In order for a man to find ultimate happiness in marriage he and his wife must work together to make their mental, spiritual, emotional, and physical differences blend into a harmonious relationship. It is called maturity.

A couple starts out their marriage in love. Because of their natural differences, which gradually become more and more apparent, conflict comes into their relationship. If they don't learn how to resolve these conflicts their love will be replaced by hostility and animosity, reducing the chance for a happy marriage.

My wife and I went to dinner with two friends that were getting married. As I listened that evening to the happy couple the young lady said, “We will have the perfect marriage, the marriage I have always dreamed of. We will never have a disagreement.” I smiled and listened and wondered how long it would be before reality set in.

The late Dr. M. R. DeHaan said, “The nearest thing to heaven on this earth is the Christian family and a home where husband and wife, parents and children, live in love and peace together for the Lord and for each other. The nearest thing to hell on earth is an ungodly home, broken by sin and iniquity, where parents bicker, quarrel, and separate, and children are abandoned to the devil and all the forces of wickedness.”

One of the most common causes of emotionally disturbed people today is the average American home. Instead of experiencing security-building love between their parents; children all too often see and feel the traumas of hostility, hatred, and animosity between the two people they love most; their mother and father. From this hostility, children develop emotional insecurity and fears that follow them all through life. God's plan for home life is different from this general experience. He wants the home to be a haven of love where husband and wife and children live with a sense of security and a feeling of acceptance.

With all the turmoil and violence outside the home, everyone needs some place in life where he is surrounded by peace and love. God ordained the home as that place of emotional safety. Everyone who marries wants that kind of love, but a happy home doesn't just happen. A happy home doesn't just happen it is worked at. It is the result of two things, proper adjustment to each other and incorporation into daily life of the principles of marriage outlined by God in the Bible. It takes two spiritual people with a right heart, desiring to have an intimate, personal passionate relationship with the Savior and with each other.

I mentioned six keys before. The first key that guarantees happiness in marriage is maturity. Growing up. Folks, this key is best defined in the emotional realm as unselfishness. Babies and small children are selfish; thus we refer to them as

immature. When a child throws a fit in a supermarket by lying on the floor screaming and kicking because he can't have his way, he is revealing his selfishness or immaturity. If a child is not properly disciplined he will go into marriage so immature that he will want his own way in practically every situation. Such an attitude is very subtle and difficult for the immature person to recognize and disastrous to a marriage. When people go into marriage wanting their own way, and desiring to live for their lusts they will struggle with building the home God wants them to build, James 4:1-10.

I. The Problem

The adjustment stage of marriage, generally the first three years, will naturally produce conflict of interest. For the first twenty years people function as independent gears. They make decisions purely on the basis of what they want or what is good for them. After the wedding, two independent individuals must learn to mesh together.

Since they are both moving objects, and all movement creates friction, there is bound to be friction as they learn to move together in unity. If two mature people come together in marriage, their spirit of selflessness will make it very easy for them to adjust. If they are immature and selfish, the early years of their marriage will be filled with "noisy clashes." Marriage consists of a series of actions and reactions motivated by our conscious and subconscious minds. The more active the people, the more potential areas of conflict can be expected. Although some conflict is inevitable between normal human beings, fighting is not necessarily the answer. By God's grace two mature, spiritual people can face their areas of conflict, discuss them, and by obeying the instructions of God's Word resolve them.

Do not get into the habit of sweeping your problems under the rug. Face them and resolve them in the Spirit. Actually, there is nothing wrong with having a conflict of interest between husband and wife. In fact, every such case is a test of your maturity. The partner that demands "his own way" in such conflicts is traveling a collision course that will produce much unhappiness and potential disaster for both of them.

II. You Never Get By Getting

I stopped by an office one time to do some business. Two ladies were talking and discussing one of the ladies husbands. As I was standing there the conversation would have been amusing if it had not been so sad. One lady said, "Honey, let me tell you don't give in to him too much or he will take advantage of you. Besides, give him an inch and he will think he is a ruler!"

In God's economy you never get anything by getting. The way to have something is give it away. If you want love for example, don't look for it; give it. If you want

friends, don't look for friends; be friendly. The same is true of thoughtfulness, consideration, and selflessness. If you want your partner to treat you unselfishly, then be mature enough by God's grace to treat him or her unselfishly. Philippians 2:3-4 "Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others." Ephesians 5:18-33 "And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in you heart to the Lord; Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ; Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God. Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. Husbands love your wives, even as Christ, also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church; For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church. Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see the she reverence her husband."

The key verse here is verse 18, being "filled or controlled by the Holy Spirit." Most Christians are not controlled by the Holy Spirit and therefore, do not know how to respond to their mate in a kind and loving manner. The way to be controlled by the Holy Spirit is to ask God daily if there is any sin standing between you and Him. Confess and turn from the sin which then puts you in a position to have fellowship with God, I John 1:9. You see you must submit yourself to Him daily. Then ask Him to fill you and control you.

If you go into marriage with this attitude you will discover happiness in your home. You must initially recognize your responsibility to make your partner happy. You should go at your marriage to give yourself to make your partner happy, and expect nothing in return. The result will be your own happiness, Ephesians 5:21 "submitting yourself one to another." Remember you cannot submit yourself one to another until you have first of all submitted to the Savior. Many Christian husbands go at marriage like this, "do what I tell you or get slapped." I am the head of the home! Great, then act like it. Show the kind of respect and love to your mate God intended. She is not your slave or your punching bag. If you are controlled by the Holy Spirit and are seeking to walk with God and seeking to love her, she will respond. You do not have to tell her

you are the head of the house all the time. It is your responsibility to make her love you, by showing her the proper love, respect and unselfishness. You are to love her as Christ loved the church, Ephesians 5:25. Remember this verse says Christ gave himself for the church. Are you willing to give up your selfishness for her?

Mike and Gloria scheduled an appointment to come to my office to talk about their marriage. They were people who both went in their own direction. Mike spent every extra hour at the golf course and went on many golf trips. He was never home and when he was home all he did was bark orders. The issues of their marriage were huge with each one going their own way. When they walked in, before we could pray or say anything, Mike angrily says, "you are to tell her she is suppose to obey me!" Unfortunately, he had already been arrested for hitting his wife and spent time in jail for it. She was never home and the house looked like it. All they ever did was yell and scream at each other. They both had been involved in lying, deception, and immorality. His and her selfishness led to the end of their marriage.

III. Selfishness is Universal

Each individual has a different temperament. All temperaments have one thing in common, the weakness of selfishness (the flesh). Selfishness is the greatest single enemy to a happy marriage and is a basic part of man's fallen nature. Selfishness is revealed differently in each temperament.

IV. How to Overcome Selfishness

Selfishness can be corrected by the power of God in conjunction with a cooperative individual. God will give you the power if you are willing to cooperate with him.

- 1. Face your selfishness as sin.**
- 2. Don't try to hide behind academic or job success to cover your selfishness. (Great at work but terrible at home.)**
- 3. Confess your selfishness as sin. And turn from it.**
- 4. Ask God to take away the habit of being selfish. I John 5:14-15 "And this is the confidence that we have in him, that if we ask any thing according to his will he heareth us: And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him." Since it is not God's will that we be selfish creatures, he will direct us in changing our habit of behaving selfishly.**
- 5. Repair the damage done by your selfishness, apologize, repent and turn from your sin of selfishness.**

One of the most important things God wants is that you have a happy marriage. Immaturity or selfishness will kill any marriage.

Many years ago while going to school, I worked in an office with a lady named Jane. She would call her husband, Tom, daily and remind him to make sure he did the dishes, scrubbed the floor, and made the bed etc. He also worked a full time job. I asked her one day what she did at home? She responded nothing, and he better have it done when I get home! What a selfish person! God's desire is for the husband is to love the wife as Christ loved the church, and the wife see she respects, loves, and cares for her husband. The first key is not to have your "own way", but to approach your mate in a mature, Christ honoring manner.

Note: Any names used in this article are not the real names as it is our desire to protect the lives of others.