



*The  
Institution  
of  
Marriage*

By PAUL M. SADLER

## **Dedication**

This timely work is dedicated to my dear wife, Vicki, with whom I've spent the past 30 wonderful years.

**THE  
INSTITUTION  
OF  
MARRIAGE**

By

PAUL M. SADLER

*Author of Exploring the Unsearchable Riches of Christ;  
The Triumph of His Grace; Trials and Temptations;  
The Historical Beginning of the Church*

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## INTRODUCTION

Thankfully, my wife and I were both saved shortly after we were married. It was not long thereafter that we began to see the importance of applying what the Scriptures had to say about “marriage” to our relationship. Some may be skeptical, but it really does work. God is the chief architect who drafted the original *blueprint* for the institution of marriage. Therefore, we are well served to uphold the roles He has established for each member of the family. Those who fail to do so usually find themselves in the midst of emotional turmoil.

Although *every* marriage experiences peaks and valleys a Christ-centered union will endure the test of time. One word sums up a relationship that’s built upon the Word of God—*commitment!* A husband and wife may find themselves in the eye of the storm, but if they are committed to one another the trial of their faith will only strengthen their marriage.

This timely exposition originally appeared in the *Berean Searchlight* where it received such a warm reception that we were prompted to place it into the present format. The reader will also find it of interest that we have *added* a section to further clarify how Romans 7 and I Corinthians 7 correspond with one another.

Young and old alike should be interested to know more about God’s design for the marriage relationship. Thus, we earnestly pray that this feeble effort to put the pen to the page will enrich the lives of many to the praise of His glory.

—Pastor Paul M. Sadler

Milwaukee, Wisconsin  
October 12, 1998



## God's Original Blueprint

It has been correctly said that there is a vast difference between a Christian home and place where Christians dwell. Simply because a number of family members know the Lord does not necessarily mean that there is peace, harmony, and a spiritual climate in that home. Unfortunately, we are witnessing some very troubling trends today when it comes to the Christian home. Let's face it, many marriages are in trouble and much of the ungodly counsel given by the world is *unsound*.

Mr. James Weed of the *National Center for Health Statistics* has determined that newlyweds today have a greater than 50% chance of being divorced at some point in the future. Although studies differ, the current rate of marriages ending in divorce is estimated to be as follows: First year of marriage—61.6% end in divorce, five years—51.9%, and ten years—40%. Those are sobering statistics, that should cause each of us to ask the question: What can be done to turn the tide?

The solution is really quite simple; we must submit ourselves to the Author and Finisher of our faith, who *designed* marriage in the beginning. Of course, the skeptic is quick to point out that there are no easy answers to deeply rooted marital problems. We've all heard it said: "You don't understand." Well, after twenty some years of counseling couples, it boils down to this: pride, stubbornness, carnality, and a *failure* to apply God's roles in the marriage relationship.

The goal of every married couple, indeed, every Christian home, should be to make Christ the Head, the Counselor and the Guide. Barbara B. Hart has captured the

very essence of this in her hymn entitled, “*A Christian Home.*”

“O give us homes with godly fathers, mothers,  
Who always place their hope and trust in Him;  
Whose tender patience turmoil never bothers,  
Whose calm and courage trouble cannot dim;  
A home where each finds joy in serving others,  
And love still shines, tho days be dark and grim.

“O Lord, our God, our homes are Thine forever!  
We trust to Thee their problems, toil, and care;  
Their bonds of love no enemy can sever,  
If Thou art always Lord and Master there:  
Be Thou the center of our least endeavor—  
Be Thou our Guest, our hearts and homes to share.”

Notice that the Christian home is far from being a perfect environment. Why? Imperfect sinners live there—sinners who are saved by the *grace of God*. It should be a place where husbands and wives desire to be conformed to the image of Christ and when problems do arise, and be assured they will, they go to the Word of God *together* to find a *biblical* solution.

## THE MARRIAGE RELATIONSHIP

**“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 Savior 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” (Eph. 5:21-25).**

Let’s suppose for a moment you own an old Chevy truck that you’ve been having problems with. You

consult the next door neighbor, who is a backyard mechanic, but he's completely baffled. So you take it to the garage where you have most of your repairs done. However, they, too, are at a loss as to the problem. Finally you call the GM dealership, where you purchased the vehicle. The dealership represents the company that *designed* and *built* the truck. Therefore, they quickly resolve the matter, simply because they engineered and assembled the parts that originally went into the vehicle.

Since God *designed* the institution of marriage, wouldn't it be prudent to consult Him concerning the blueprint of the marriage relationship? God has established roles within the relationship that, if obeyed, will ultimately bring marital bliss. Although this may seem rather simplistic, most marital problems can be traced back to a failure to follow these guidelines. Thus, husbands and wives must ask themselves if they are *fulfilling* their God-given role.

Husbands are to love their wives with a sacrificial love, and in so doing they emulate the love of Christ for His Church. Wives on the other hand are to submit themselves to their husbands, which symbolizes the Church's submission to Christ. As we shall see, this does not mean that she is to grovel at the feet of a husband who may have confused his role with that of a tyrant. Before we enter into this discussion further, perhaps we should examine a few general principles that God has established in regard to the marriage relationship.

#### **a. God's Creative Genius**

**“And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness....So God created man in His own image, in**

**the image of God created He him; male and female created He them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.” (Gen. 1:26-28).**

That man was created in the image of God is significant for a number of reasons. First and foremost, God is a *trinity*—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. When God molded man from the dust of the earth and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, He created him a trichotomous being—body, soul, and spirit. Second, God possesses the characteristics of *personality*, therefore, when man came forth from His hand, He created Him with an *intellect, emotions, and will*.

In these two senses, generally speaking, it might be correctly said that the man and the woman are created *equal*. The woman as well as the man is a trichotomous being. Furthermore, she possesses a personality. But here is where equality gives way to diversity. In many ways, men and women are as different as snowflakes. In regard to the roles that God gave to the man and woman to uphold in marriage, they are equally important, but they are *not* one and the same.

With this in mind, we should note from the above passage that “...in the image of God created He him; male and female created He them.” In other words, the woman is *also* created in His image and to abuse her in any way, whether physically or emotionally, is to show *contempt* for the image of God.

Peter says: “Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them [your wives] according to knowledge...” (I Peter 3:7). It is the responsibility of the husband to *know* everything there is to know about his wife. He should be familiar

with everything she fears and be especially astute concerning her likes and dislikes. A husband should also be sensitive to his wife's *emotional* make up, which is considerably different than his own.

She often wears her emotions on her sleeve and can be brought to tears simply by reading a sad novel. That's how God made her! Husbands who callously snap, "Get a hold of yourself, your being ridiculous!" are gluttons for punishment. Such insensitivity will usually leave a husband searching for the right words of apology later. A word to the wise here should be sufficient. A woman's memory is like an elephant—she never forgets those unthoughtful words and unkind actions. A husband will be old and gray, only to be reminded from time to time of how insensitive he was thirty years ago! Emotional scars, like physical scars, are *permanent*.

Peter adds that husbands are to honor their wives "...as unto the weaker vessel..." (ver.7b). I know this isn't politically correct today, but a woman is not equal to a man physically. God never intended her to bench press two hundred pounds. Thus, husbands need to be cognizant of the fact that when they expect their wives to pull their part of the load, it doesn't mean she should be pushing a wheelbarrow full of concrete at a construction site. Nor should she be expected to throw a fifty-pound bag of potatoes over her shoulder and carry it to the basement. The woman's gifts and abilities lie in a completely different area.

You will recall that when God placed our first parents in the Garden, He gave *them* "dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth." This indicates that the woman is just as *intelligent* and capable of making decisions as the man. But it is helpful

to understand that men and women think differently. Although the jury is still out, medical science has discovered that men tend to think with only one-half of their brain at a time, whereas women use the entire hemisphere.

This may explain why men are so *focused*. Ladies, have you noticed when your husband is reading the newspaper it's like talking to a brick wall? Dear, how was your day at the office? Fine! Did you call your sister today about dinner this weekend? No! Your son fell out of a tree today and broke his leg. That's nice! *He's focused!!*

The mind of a woman is like a *scanner*. She can handle three or four things at one time and do them all well. If we are planning a trip, I'm usually studying the road atlas, oblivious to everything else going on around me—I'm focused! Then there's my wife; she's washing dishes, on the phone with the dog kennel, and pointing to our youngest not to forget his homework on the counter. She runs through the preparations for the trip in her mind every hour on the hour. I must admit though that upon arriving at our destination, I'm usually the first to say, "I think I forgot my razor!" To which my wife softly replies from the other room, "It's in the back compartment of the blue suitcase." She's good!

So then, if a wife understands that her husband is not necessarily ignoring her, but merely being focused, it will save her a tremendous amount of *frustration*. She must learn the importance of getting his attention first, before addressing world issues. Next, the husband who helps his wife with the mental list of things she needs to accomplish will soon win her affection. This may seem like a small matter to some, but if husbands and wives are *attentive* to the fact that they function on

different wavelengths, it will greatly ease tension within the marriage relationship.

### **b. Leaving and Cleaving**

**“And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept; and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof. And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh” (Gen. 2:21-24).**

Upon removing a rib from Adam’s side, God created the woman. Interestingly, the Hebrew word “rib” here is *plural* and literally denotes “Adam’s *side*.” In short, God removed *both* bone and flesh from the man’s side and created the woman. Hence Adam states: “This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman.” Adam (Heb. man *Ish*) recognized the woman (Heb. *Isha*) was taken from him, and like him, she, too, was a *person*. Thus, the woman was a suitable help fit for the man, one who would be a perfect *complement* to him. In the very fullest sense of the word, she *completes* the man physically, emotionally, and spiritually. We should also note here that by *order* of creation the man is given the position of *headship*.

In addition to God’s creative genius, He ordained the institution of marriage. Marriage was not a product of primitive man who is often portrayed dragging a woman by the hair with one hand and carrying a club in the other. Of course, the evolutionist believes this to be the beginning of a monogamous relationship. Mankind has indeed established many institutions; however, marriage isn’t one of them.

It was God who designed the marriage relationship, and gave us the regulations to govern it. In fact, God Himself walked the first bride down the aisle (“and brought her unto the man”) and presented her to her husband-to-be. Thus, marriage is “not to be entered into unadvisedly or lightly; but reverently, discreetly, advisedly, and in the fear of God.”

**“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” (Eph. 5:31).**

This particular quote by the Apostle Paul is taken directly from the Book of Genesis. Although we are living in the dispensation of Grace, the Holy Spirit reminds us that the blueprint of marriage remains the *same*. The first rule of thumb for beginning the marriage relationship on the right foot is what has been called the “leaving and cleaving” process. The Lord is very clear that the man and the woman are to *leave* their father and mother, that is, they are no longer directly responsible to them.

On the basis of this passage, my wife and I consistently instructed our children when they came of age, that they are more than welcome to remain at home as long as they so choose. However, the day they marry, they are no longer permitted to live at home. Of course, if their house were to burn down, they would be more than welcome to return home until they could make other living arrangements. We are speaking of permanently returning home to live. And of course, they are always welcome to visit.

This may seem rather harsh, but there are two good reasons for this rule. First, once a young adult experiences his or her independence, they are less inclined to obey the wishes of their parents if they return home.

In short, it teaches them *responsibility*. Second, it gives them more *incentive* to make their marriage work, if they understand they can't come running home at the first sign of a problem.

When newlyweds come together in the holy bonds of matrimony, they are creating a *new* home. Therefore, the best wedding gift mothers and fathers can give their children on their wedding day IS TO LET GO!! They will always be Mom and Dad, who deserve love and respect, but they must *never* interfere. There will be times when newlyweds will naturally seek the counsel of their parents, and parents should stand ready to help. But they must also be prepared to accept the fact that their children may feel the counsel they are given is inappropriate for their home.

The three most common areas of marital problems that young couples face during the first five years of marriage center around *family*, *finances*, and *intimacy*. Sometimes it is difficult to stand back and see your children heading for a crash course with reality, but it is always best, as a parent, to follow the guidelines of God's Word, even though experience can be a hard taskmaster.



## Marriage and Celibacy

The *home* is the foundation of society, government, and the Church. If the home is under attack, whether from within as a result of sin or from without due to Satan, it will adversely affect every strata of human relations. For those who may question this, simply consider the ills of our own nation—immorality, abuse, AIDS, abortion, welfare, juvenile delinquency, teen suicide, etc. Even the fall of Rome can be traced to a *moral* decay from within. The world is an infirmary of sorrow. Sadly, however, many of these same problems also plague Christian homes.

This reminds me of the time Vince Lombardi, the legendary coach of the Green Bay Packers, held a football high into the air before his all-pro team and said: “Gentleman this is a *football!*” In other words, it’s back to the *basics*. Great advice! Perhaps someone needs to stand up before the household of God and hold a Bible into the air and shout: “Brethren, this is a *Bible!*” Of course, the point would be to challenge believers to get back to the *fundamentals* of the original blueprint God established for the home.

**“Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me: It is good for a man not to touch a woman. Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband” (I Cor. 7:1,2).**

To say that the Apostle Paul had his hands full with the Corinthians would be an understatement. They were into more trouble than a little one going through his terrible two’s. The phrase: “Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me” suggests the apostle

had spent the better part of six chapters dealing with the carnal actions of these members of the Body of Christ. With those matters set to rest, Paul now addresses their questions regarding *marriage* and the issue of things offered to idols.

Apparently, there were some in this assembly who condoned the practice of *fornication*, which alarmed some of the brethren—and justifiably so. Although immorality was commonplace among the Greeks, this was *unacceptable* behavior for a believer in Christ. Fornication is normally associated with premarital relations, but the original Greek word *porneia* goes far beyond this meaning to include every type of sexual perversion imaginable. It extends from incestuous to homosexual relationships and everything illicit in between. For example:

**“It is reported commonly that there is *fornication* among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father’s wife. And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you” (I Cor. 5:1,2).**

**“Even as Sodom and Gomorrhah, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to *fornication*, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire” (Jude 7).**

God’s answer to this sin is *marriage*. Thus to avoid fornication the apostle clearly states: “let every man have his *own* wife, and let every woman have her *own* husband.” Marriage provides a *safeguard* against temptation, disease, and feelings of guilt. From the beginning God has always intended one man for one woman. But how do we explain the fact that Abraham, Jacob, Moses, and David had multiple wives? Solomon had a large harem, which included seven hundred wives and

princesses, and three hundred concubines, most of whom served as wives.

Here we have a matter of the directive and permissive will of God. While a strong case could be made from eastern culture for having more than one wife, the fact remains that the Lord Himself states: “And he answered and said unto them [Pharisees], Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his *wife*: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder” (Matt. 19:4-6).

Notice the Lord uses the singular form “wife” not “wives.” This is also confirmed through His apostle here in Corinthians, “let every man have his *own wife*.” Although God *allowed* the practice of having more than one wife in time past, those who stepped into these treacherous waters normally lived to regret it. These arrangements almost always inflamed the fires of *jealousy*. In some cases, they even caused a departure from the known will of God.

When Hagar conceived Ishmael, Sarah was *enraged*: “And he [Abraham] went in unto Hagar, and she conceived: and when she [Sarah] saw that she had conceived, her mistress was *despised* in her eyes” (Gen. 16:4).

Probably, a small percentage of Solomon’s marriages were politically motivated, which means some of his wives were in name only. Nevertheless, when he foolishly married outside the house of God, his *Gentile* wives caused him to depart from the ways of the Lord. “For it came to pass, when Solomon was old, that his *wives turned away his heart* after other gods: and his heart

was not perfect with the LORD his God, as was the heart of David his father....And Solomon did evil in the sight of the LORD, and went not fully after the LORD, as did David his father” (I Kings 11:4,6).

In spite of the shortcomings and failures of the patriarchs and prophets, God often used their circumstances to further His plans and purposes. So even through our imperfections He will ultimately be glorified. But for our *sakes*, it is always preferable to remain in the *center* of His will.

**“For I would that all men were even as I myself. But every man hath his proper gift of God, one after this manner, and another after that. I say therefore to the unmarried and widows, It is good for them if they abide even as I. But if they cannot contain, let them marry: for it is better to marry than to burn” (I Cor. 7:7-9).**

Paul’s statements: “For I would that all men were even as I myself,” and, “It is good for them [the unmarried and widows] if they abide even as I [i.e. single],” have caused some to conclude that the apostle viewed marriage with contempt. We feel, however, that this charge is totally without merit. There is a general consensus that prior to receiving his apostleship Paul had been married, but afterward tragically lost his wife. This assumption is based upon his declaration that he had been a *Pharisee*. According to historians it was mandatory for one to be married to belong to this sect.

The issue here is why Paul seems to be encouraging the believers at Corinth to remain *unmarried*. The solution to the problem is found in verse 26:

**“I suppose therefore that this is good for the present distress, I say, that it is good for a man so to be. Art thou bound unto a wife? seek not to be loosed. Art thou loosed from a wife? seek not a wife. But and if thou marry, thou**

**hast not sinned....Nevertheless such shall have trouble in the flesh: but I spare you.”**

The key phrase here is “*the present distress.*” Paul admonishes them as a father that under the circumstances it was in their best interest *not* to marry if they were unattached. The blood of the martyrs had already begun to run through the streets of the ancient world and the apostle knew that the *persecution* would soon intensify. History bears witness that many Christians even sought refuge in the *catacombs*.<sup>1</sup> Back then it cost something to name the name of Christ, as seen in Paul’s words to the saints at Thessalonica: “So that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith in *all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure*” (II Thes. 1:4).

Paul knew the heartache couples would experience when Christian husbands were taken and cast to the lions. So during times of persecution, it is better to remain *unmarried*. Thus wisdom says: “Art thou loosed from a wife? seek not a wife.” Paul adds, “But if they cannot contain, let them marry: for it is better to marry than to burn,” that is, with *lustful* desire. Interestingly, those who do marry at such times have not sinned. But they do leave themselves susceptible to suffer trouble in the flesh at the hands of evildoers (I Cor. 7:9,27,28).

So then, Paul is not the ogre some make him out to be; he was simply concerned about the *welfare* of the saints. The apostle held the institution of marriage in the highest esteem, referring to it as a *gift*. “But every man hath his proper gift of God, one after this manner, and another after that” (I Cor. 7:7). For the most part, we believe it is God’s will for men and women to marry. Of course, there are exceptions to the rule.

Paul says, “one after this manner, and another after that.” In other words, some have the gift of marriage while others have the gift of celibacy. Those who have the latter gift are given a special measure of grace to remain *single*. As we know, celibacy has always been closely associated with religious monks or priests who live cloistered lives. However, if those who piously participate in these religious orders do not have the gift of celibacy, it will inevitably end in *immorality*. The past ten years or so have only served to highlight the accuracy of this last statement as one scandal after another has made headline news.

True celibacy is a *gift* from God. Those who possess this gift have no desire to be married. This also applies to those who never remarry after the death of their partner. They find their sufficiency *in Christ* and normally are perfectly content to live alone. The Scriptures say in this regard, “The unmarried woman careth for the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit...” While the married woman has contentment through a Christ-centered marriage, the unmarried woman finds fulfillment by consecrating herself *wholly* to the things of the Lord.

I had an aunt who epitomized the above. She was as *pure* as newly fallen snow. The day my wife and I were saved, we rushed to visit our families convinced that everyone would be as excited about our conversion as we were. Of course, most of them thought we had a concussion from some type of fall. My aunt’s response was *jubilant*, followed by these words: “I have been praying for you and Vicki every day for three years that you would come to know Christ.” Those weren’t idle words, she meant it! She added, “now I am going to pray that God will call you into full-time service.” Well,

I guess you might say we are the fruits of my aunt's prayer life.

But how does one determine if they have the gift of marriage? Since celibacy is the exception to the rule, this is relatively easy to ascertain. Those who have this gift *desire* to be married. They are uncomfortable with the thought of being single the rest of their life. Singles customarily spend a lot of time dreaming (rightly so) about one day having their own home and eventually a family. And both young men and women almost always will feel life is passing them by if they aren't married by age 22. In short, those who have the gift of marriage are usually *consumed* with the thought.

### **PREPARATIONS FOR MARRIAGE**

Normally the procedure for choosing the right partner for life begins on the wrong foot. The counsel of the world goes something like this: appearance, compatibility, education, and financial status. Unfortunately, the Church has been so influenced by the world these days that believers seem to also have the idea that these factors insure a happy marriage relationship.

Consider *appearance* for a moment. It will matter very little at 2:30 a.m. that a husband is tall, dark, and handsome when the firstborn is screaming at the top of her lungs. And it's about this same time that the vision of beauty he married with long, flowing hair down to her waist has it cut short for practical considerations. Well, isn't *compatibility* surely a must? Isn't it essential to have the same likes and dislikes? But what profit is there if both a husband and wife are computer literate or enjoy playing tennis when the breadwinner comes home to inform his wife that he lost his job because the company downsized?

Now please don't misunderstand me, there's nothing wrong with having the same interests or a good education or being financially responsible. These things are indeed commendable, but *believers* who make them the foundation of their marriage relationship are like the man who built his house upon the sand. "And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it."

Believers in Christ should begin their search for Mr. or Mrs. Right according to the pattern of God's Word. The four essentials for a Christ-centered marriage are: salvation, spirituality, convictions, and a willingness to solve problems biblically. Salvation is the first essential, simply because believers are not to be unequally yoked to unbelievers. It is God's will that believers only marry *in the Lord*.

**"...she is at liberty to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord" (I Cor. 7:39).**

**"Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?" (II Cor. 6:14).**

Those who violate these clear injunctions will only heap *sorrow* upon themselves. A young lady may have good intentions that she will reach her fiancé for Christ after they are married, but this is seldom the case. The fact is, the unbeliever normally draws the believer away into the things of the world. Through the years, I have had a number of godly women share with me that the thing they regretted most in life was being married to an unbeliever. Nearly all said, it wasn't that their husbands were not good providers; they were, but there was *no* fellowship with them in the gospel. Disobeying the Word of God always has *consequences!*

Although it is not a biblical prerequisite that a marriage partner has the other three spiritual graces, they do provide the means through which the relationship will function more smoothly. For example, if a young woman is a grace believer and marries a dyed-in-the-wool Baptist, he naturally has very strong *convictions* that they should attend a Baptist Church. In his words, he was born a Baptist, was raised a Baptist, and will die a Baptist. Of course, the issue is only complicated a hundred-fold when the little ones come along. What should they be taught—Baptist or grace doctrine?

The wife could compromise, but this runs contrary to her convictions, which are as deep as her husband's. They could attend different churches, but this divides the family. Another option would be to stay at home; however, the Scriptures teach us that we shouldn't forsake the assembling of ourselves together. I rest my case!



## A High and Holy Calling

I came across an amusing story a short time ago about a little girl by the name of Suzie who was four years old. Suzie attended nursery school and one day she was told the story of *Snow White* for the first time in her life. She was so excited she couldn't wait to get home to tell her mother.

Suzie gave a stunning theatrical performance as she retold the story of how Prince Charming arrived upon his white horse and kissed Snow White back to life. Suzie then paused a moment and said: "Then, do you know what happened?" To which her mother replied, "Yes, they lived happily ever after." "No, they got *married!*" Suzie touched upon a profound truth. Namely, getting married and living happily ever after are not necessarily synonymous. But they can be if we merely *apply* the counsel of God's Word.

Within the marriage relationship God has established roles to ensure *harmony*. Husbands are instructed to *love* their wives, while the wife is given the role of *submission*. Although these roles are *equally* important, they are *not* one and the same. The husband, by order of creation, is given the position of *headship*. In other words, he was created *first*. Thus, the head of the woman is the man.

The Scriptures clearly state: "For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man. Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man" (I Cor. 11:8,9). Pastor Stam once shared with me, after fifty years of service, that it was his observation that "spiritual Christian women have absolutely no

desire to wrestle from the man his God-given *authority* and *responsibility*. They want him to take the lead.”

In addition, when the evil one appeared in the garden to tempt Eve, it is customarily portrayed that Adam was taking a leisurely walk among the trees of the garden, far beyond earshot. However, a closer examination of the narrative reveals that he was standing *beside* his wife (Gen. 3:6). The tempter completely pulled the wool over the woman’s eyes, *deceiving* her into thinking she was doing the right thing by eating the forbidden fruit. Adam on the other hand was *not deceived*, but *willfully* sinned against God. He wanted to be like God, to know the difference between good and evil.

Thus, the woman is more likely to be drawn into a *deceptive scheme* than the man is. That is not to say men cannot be deceived, but, more often than not, the man will see through a deception. So then, a godly wife who understands the *Fall*, which adds another dimension to the man’s headship, will find a divine *safeguard* built into her husband’s leadership.

## SUBMISSION

**“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 Savior of the Body. Therefore as the Church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing” (Eph. 5:21-24).**

We are about to tread upon ground where most pastors fear to tread. The ground we speak of is the woman’s role of *submission*. The term “submit” Gr. *hupotasso* is “primarily a military term, which denotes to rank under or to arrange.” Of course, the Church has been so

influenced by the world that it has buckled under to the philosophy that any form of submission is demeaning. We are told today that the woman's role of submission makes her inferior and therefore her role is less important. Hence the struggle for equal rights. Actually, nothing could be further from the truth. The problem lies with our understanding of the term submission.

For example, every time you attend a worship service, you're *submitting* yourself to a pastor's ministry. Every time you walk through the door where you are employed, you're placing yourself *under the authority* of another. Every time you drive down the highway, you're *submitting* yourself to the laws of the road. Every time you pay your federal income taxes, you're *submitting* to the governmental powers that be.

Question: Does the above suggest that you are inferior, that is, less intelligent, less adequate, or less worthwhile? No! You see, submission, has to do with *order*. It's the *lubrication* that cuts down the friction between relationships. It causes things to run smoothly in the home, the Church, the government, and society. Imagine if a large group within a congregation desired to preach every Sunday morning. The *confusion* would soon cause the assembly to close its doors. As you can see, submission plays a very important role in our lives.

Although a wife may be just as capable as her husband regarding matters at home, she is instructed by God to place herself under his watchful care. We doubt that there is a Christian wife reading these lines who would dispute Christ's Headship over the Church. As members of the Body of Christ we have *willingly* placed ourselves under His authority. "Therefore as the Church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing" (Eph. 5:24). Thus, the wife's

role of submission to her husband is a divine *representation* of a much higher truth.

I am sure I'll be burned at the stake for this, but in a Christ-centered home, the woman's *first* responsibility is to her family. Paul says: "The aged women likewise, that they be in behavior as becometh holiness...teachers of good things; That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, To be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the Word of God be not blasphemed" (Titus 2:3-5).

The role of *homemaker* is a high and holy calling. Here is another area where the world has led the Christian community down the *wrong* path. Sadly, when Christian mothers find themselves questioned about their livelihood, the moment they give their professional title as "homemaker," they're almost immediately *belittled*. "You mean you don't work?" "How do you folks make end's meet?" "Have you ever worked?" "Surely you plan to help out sometime?" These are unfortunate statements that reflect a trend away from a biblical parameter, which always has *consequences*.

If careers, two family incomes, day care centers, latch-key children, and more possessions are normal by today's humanistic standards, then why are broken homes, abuse, crime, and violence overrunning our country? Obviously, something is terribly wrong with this type of philosophy. The moment a mother is removed from her *primary* God-given role as a homemaker, it is akin to removing the hub from the center of a wheel. At our home, for example, if I'm down sick, or one of the kids has a fever, everything appears normal around the house. If my wife is sick, we call 911! The house usually looks like a tornado just passed through

and no one can recall the last time they had a wholesome meal.

The apostle instructs the older women (mothers, grandmothers, great grandmothers, aunts, etc.) to teach the younger women “to be keepers at home.” In other words, how to cook, sew, clean, organize, and raise their little ones in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Most young women today couldn’t tell you the difference between “baking soda” and “baking powder,” even if their lives depended upon it. If the woman fails to uphold her role or becomes disobedient to her husband, she places the Word of God in jeopardy of being *blasphemed*. Ladies, never give the unsaved the occasion to point their finger of accusation at you with the charge of *rebellion*.

An old Mennonite pastor once said: “A woman can fill no greater role than preparing the next generation for life’s responsibilities....Naturally, mothers are often best suited for this role because God has endowed them with the *tender qualities* needed for the job. God expects mothers to guide the house (I Timothy 5:14), and He alone can enable them for the rigor of homemaking.”

A woman has the unique ability to make a cold, plain house a *home*. A house is a place where we sleep. A home is an *atmosphere*. It is where our children are raised in the presence of parents who show *affection* toward one another. A habitation where children are loved, taught, and nurtured in the things of the Lord. We’ve repeatedly said over the years that if mothers fail to bring their children up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, when our present congregations lie in the dust of the earth, the pews will be *empty*. Incidentally, we are not speaking about religious churches, but rather sound Bible-believing assemblies where the

*blood of Christ* is preached. As the old axiom says: “The hand that rocks the cradle rules the world.”

By now, someone is reading these lines thinking, boy, is Pastor Sadler out of touch with the real world. Actually, I did a reality check before I wrote this chapter. Beloved, simply because the world says, “everyone is doing it, therefore it must be right,” doesn’t make it right! Society generally accepts *abortion* these days as a viable option for birth control.<sup>1</sup> Does this make it morally right? “But everyone’s doing it!”

What saith the Scriptures? They clearly state that life begins at *conception*, therefore to *intentionally* terminate a pregnancy is nothing short of *murder* (Psa. 51:5,6; Jer. 1:4,5 cf. Gen. 9:5,6; Rom. 13:9). The Lord has also established *guidelines* for the Christian home, but the question we must ask ourselves is, *are we following them?*

## THE WORKPLACE

While the Scriptures do give *liberty* for the woman to work outside the home, it is preferable if this can be *avoided*, especially if little ones are involved. A mother is only given one opportunity to have a positive impact upon her young. Those early developmental years are *critical* as the personalities of these little ones are being molded. The question is, do you want someone raising your children that may *not* share your moral or spiritual values? Then there’s the matter of discipline. Most child-care providers are very reluctant to discipline someone else’s children.

Of course, we are well aware that it is becoming increasingly difficult to make ends meet on one income. In fact, the day is fast approaching when two incomes will be a necessity. Nevertheless, we feel strongly that if it is at all possible, mothers should try to avoid working

outside the home until their children are grown. Some “domestic engineers” work part-time at home to help supplement the family income. The *influence* of one parent in the home at all times cannot be overstated.

The importance of the above paragraph came home to roost at a recent family gathering. During the years my wife and I served at local assemblies, we often did hospital visits together. Of course, this meant we weren’t always at home when the kids arrived from school. Since the two oldest (our youngest was yet to arrive) were in Junior and Senior High at the time, we never gave it much thought, because we were ordinarily home before dinner.

As we all sat around the table reminiscing not long ago, both of the kids stated how they hated to come home from school when no one was there. The house seemed so cold and lonely. It may seem like a small thing, but it was important to them that one of us (usually mom) was at home. If a mother must work, she should attempt to arrange her schedule so it coincides with her children’s school schedule.

There are a number of examples in the Scriptures where women worked both within and outside the home. As we know, the virtuous woman burned the midnight oil.

**“She considereth a field, and buyeth it: with the *fruit* of her hands she planteth a vineyard...She perceiveth that her *merchandise* is good: her candle goeth not out by night. She layeth her hands to the spindle, and her hands hold the distaff<sup>2</sup>...She maketh fine linen, and *selleth* it; and delivereth girdles unto the merchant” (Prov. 31:16-24).**

Lydia seemed to have owned her own business, traveling from place to place selling her fine-spun cloth to merchants:

**“And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul” (Acts 16:14).**

Some have suggested that *both* Aquila and Priscilla labored together at the craft of tentmaking. If so, Priscilla probably helped with some of the *sewing* aspects of the trade. This would have been well within the boundaries of acceptable behavior for women of that period. Although Paul was the apostle to the Gentiles, he occasionally relied upon his occupation of tentmaking to support himself. This was especially true during his early ministry, which placed less of a financial burden upon the churches. There is an old Hebrew saying that goes something like this: A man who doesn't teach his son a *skill*, teaches him to steal.

**“After these things Paul departed from Athens, and came to Corinth; And found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, lately come from Italy, with his wife Priscilla....And because he was of the same craft, he abode with them, and wrought: for by their occupation they were tentmakers” (Acts 18:1-3).**

Phebe was evidently a wealthy *businesswoman* from Cenchrea. In fact, she *hand* delivered Paul's epistle to the Romans, and was personally involved in the business affairs of a number of local assemblies.<sup>3</sup>

**“I commend unto you Phebe our sister, which is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea: That ye receive her in the Lord, as becometh saints, and that ye assist her in whatsoever business she hath need of you: for she hath been a succourer [helper] of many, and of myself also” (Rom. 16:1,2).**

My hat is off to working women, both past and present, that keep up with husbands (a full-time job in

itself), children, and the home. Surely a great recompense of reward awaits these godly women who make this type of *sacrifice*. According to the Scriptures though, working outside the home is the *exception*, not the rule, ladies. The home is the realm where you will find your greatest *fulfillment*.

Fear not ladies, in the next chapter we are going to tackle the *role of the husband*. So you may want to have a *highlighter* ready. By the way, I'll do my best to be objective!



## Love That Knows No Bounds

The role the Lord has given to the man in the marriage relationship is *headship*. Sadly, many men have confused headship with dictatorship. A dictator selfishly demands the servitude of his subjects without regard to their will. He often rules oppressively through fear and unreasonable demands. Such behavior has no place in the Christian home. The husband who tramples his wife's emotions under foot like a doormat should remember that she, too, is created in the image of God. Husbands are responsible to provide *loving* leadership for their wives to follow. In so doing, they are emulating Christ's Headship. Notice that the Lord's Headship is bound inseparably to *love*.

**“For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the Head of the Church: and He is the Savior of the Body....Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church, and gave Himself for it” (Eph. 5:23,25).**

What is *love*? We are always hearing the world speak about falling in love. Unfortunately, the world has confused love with *lust*. Men and women do indeed fall into lustful situations. Love, however, does not come naturally in this sin-cursed world; it must be *learned* (Titus 2:3-5). Thus, through the pen of the apostle the Lord *commands* husbands to love their wives. This strongly implies that men tend to be preoccupied with themselves. When the Lord confronted Adam about his disobedience, he sought to defend *himself* without any regard for the welfare of his wife. “It’s that woman you gave me, she’s to blame.” *Love* would have said, “Lord, I am the guilty party who failed to shield my wife from the words of the tempter.”

The love with which the Lord instructs husbands to love their wives is defined for us in I Corinthians Chapter 13:

“Charity suffereth long...” Love is *patient*. Jacob labored seven years for the right to marry Rachel, only to learn that her father had deceived him. Consequently, “...Jacob served [an additional] seven years for Rachel; and they seemed unto him but a few days, for the *love* he had to her” (Gen. 29:20).

“And is kind...” Love does something special, even when there isn’t a special occasion to remember. A godly husband will always take into *consideration* his wife’s feelings.

“Charity envieth not...” Love isn’t *jealous*. It delights to see her honored or recognized.

“Charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up...” A husband may have a college education, but he must never flaunt it before his wife. Love *never boasts*, it always finds ways to build her up and encourage her.

“Doth not behave itself unseemly...” Love is *never uncourteous*. It has manners. A husband who loves his wife will take great care to introduce her to those whom she may not know, and he will never neglect her while in the company of others.

“Seeketh not her own...” Love is staying home from a major outing to watch the kids if your wife isn’t feeling well. It’s *unselfish*.

“Is not easily provoked...” Love is always in *control*. It doesn’t easily lose its temper and never uses *unkind* words. If a wife wrecks the family car, how should love respond? Probably most husband’s would say: “*You did what!!!*” “*How much damage was done?*” “*Now what are we going to do for transportation while the car is*

*being repaired?*” Needless to say, this isn’t the correct reply. She’s already devastated by the accident and therefore needs a large dose of *compassion*.

“Thinketh no evil....” Some years ago I had an interesting counseling session with a couple who were experiencing marital problems. The husband had barely sat down when he pulled out a long list of grievances against his wife, which incidentally, included dates and times. I looked it over briefly, crumpled it up, and said: “According to I Corinthians 13:5, love doesn’t keep a *ledger of wrongs*.” He is probably still recovering!

“Rejoiceth not in iniquity....” Love never seeks *revenge*. A wife may make an unwise purchase without her husband’s knowledge, but it only intensifies the problem if he *sinfully* runs up the Visa card, simply out of spite.

“But rejoiceth in the truth....” For a marriage to abide the storms of life, it must be based upon speaking the truth in love. *Trust* and *respect* are the fruits of a relationship built upon truth.

“Beareth all things....” Love *bears up* under difficult circumstances. Perhaps a husband learns that his wife has an incurable illness. Love stays by her side as they bear the burden together.

“Believeth all things....” Love always accepts things at *face value*. Inasmuch as marriage is built upon a mutual trust, love should cause a couple to take each other at their word.

“Hopeth all things....” Although every marriage experiences bumpy roads along the way, love has *high expectations* that things will improve as problems are resolved. It’s optimistic!

“Endureth all things....” Through times of tragedy, death, and unforeseen circumstances the head of the family should be like a mighty fortress. He understands that God is sovereign and “He doeth according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What doest thou?” (Dan. 4:35).

While most marriages begin smoothly, they have a tendency to lose some of their splendor after the first year or two. In other words, the honeymoon’s over, now it’s down to the nuts and bolts of every day married life. Acts of thoughtfulness, affection, concern, and gifts begin to wax and wane under the load of responsibility. Usually this trend begins with the husband, who fails to *consistently* apply the love chapter. We recently came across a story that appeared in the *Washington Post* entitled: “The Seven Ages of the Married Cold,” which drives home the point:

*The first year:* “Sugar dumpling, I’m really worried about my baby girl. You’ve got a bad sniffle and there’s no telling about these things with all this strep going around. I’m putting you in the hospital this afternoon for a general checkup and a good rest. I know the food’s lousy, but I’ll be bringing your meals in from Rossini’s. I’ve already got it arranged with the floor superintendent.”

*The second year:* “Listen darling, I don’t like the sound of that cough. I’ve called Doc Miller and asked him to rush over here. Now you go to bed like a good girl, please, just for papa.”

*The third year:* “Maybe you’d better lie down, honey: nothing like a little rest when you feel lousy. I’ll bring you something. Have you got any canned soup?”

*The fourth year:* “Now look, dear, be sensible. After you’ve fed the kids, washed the dishes, and finished the floors, you’d better lie down.”

*The fifth year:* “Why don’t you take a couple of aspirin?”

*The sixth year:* “I wish you would just gargle or something instead of sitting around all evening barking like a seal.”

*The seventh year:* “For Pete’s sake, stop sneezing! Are you trying to give me pneumonia?”

According to the eternal purpose of God, Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for it. To which the apostle adds: “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.” When the trump sounds the members of the Body of Christ will have the unique honor of being *presented* to the Lord. Think of it, sinners saved by grace, sanctified by grace, and delivered to glory by grace, will be displayed before the host of heaven as the trophies of His grace! This will one day be a reality because Christ stepped across the stars into this world of sin and woe to redeem us back to God. He loved us with a sacrificial love. In this same context the apostle states:

**“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” (Eph. 5:26-29).**

Husbands are to love their wives with a *sacrificial love*. The husband is to care for his wife and protect her, even as Christ does the Church. He is to *cherish* her as he

does his own body. It is common knowledge that men normally pamper themselves if they have been injured in some way. If a woman cuts her finger in the kitchen she'll put a bandage on it and never break stride. When a man cuts his finger; he'll probably require stitches, faithfully change the dressing, take regular doses of aspirin to curb the pain, and more than likely miss a day's work for fear of bumping the injured finger!

Paul is illustrating that if a husband pays this type of *attention* to his wife she will naturally reciprocate by following his leadership. A wife should be treated like a fine piece of china—precious and easily broken!

## HEADSHIP

As we have seen, according to Ephesians 5:23, the husband is “the head of the wife.” Headship means leadership, that is, leadership governed by *love*. Sad to say, we have all witnessed families where the husband has brashly declared: “I am the head of this house,” and all must bow in fear and trembling. Consequently, the household is run like a military camp where there's a strict code of discipline for every infraction. This isn't biblical headship. Biblical leadership involves responsibility, *management*, love, and compassion.

Interestingly, when Paul wrote to Timothy concerning the qualifications for those who desired to be an elder, he states: “One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?)” (I Tim. 3:2,3). The term “ruleth” used here has the idea to care for, preside over, to manage. He is to effectively *manage* his home.

The man is ultimately responsible to provide food, clothing, and shelter for his family. While a wife may

volunteer to help bear the burden, the Scriptures clearly teach: “But if any provide not for **his** own, and specially for those of **his** own house, **he** hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel” (I Tim. 5:8).

Although most men fare pretty well at providing the physical needs of their home, far too many fail to set a good example in *spiritual things*. Godly leadership includes studying the Scriptures, devotions, prayer, and making sure the family has a regular place to worship. It provides an atmosphere wherein each member of the family can grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. Children that see *both* parents on their knees seeking God’s direction will be far less likely to end up juvenile delinquents.

There is an old saying that still rings true: “Two heads are better than one.” Seeing that the woman is also created in the image of God, she adds many things to the marriage relationship—grace, intelligence, ideas, etc. Therefore, a husband is well served if he and his wife make decisions *together*. A wife’s counsel, suggestions, and warnings should be weighed very carefully in the decision making process. Moreover, they should be implemented if they have *merit*.

As a rule, a husband and wife will ordinarily agree upon what course of action should be taken to resolve a problem. But there may be times when they will not see eye to eye on a particular matter. In such cases the husband should make the final decision since he will be held *accountable* at the Judgment Seat of Christ for everything that transpired in the home (II Cor. 5:10 cf. Eph. 5:23).

Those who work at the corporate level understand the importance of matching an employee’s skills with the job description they are seeking to fill. That’s called

good management. Along these same lines, it is the better part of wisdom if a husband makes wise use of his wife's God-given *abilities*. She can be a real *asset* in the affairs of the home. For example, my wife is a whiz working with figures. Our checkbook looks like the ones you see in textbooks. In fact, we were at the bank one day to have a problem corrected—that *they* had made on our checking account statement—when the vice president came over to ask my wife if she wanted a job! He was looking for someone who could *teach* the bank's younger customers how to balance a checkbook.

Of course, you already know what I'm about to say. Since my wife could be employed at the First National Bank, I've turned all of our finances over to her. She writes all the checks, reconciles the accounts, pays the bills, and believe it or not, *enjoys it*. As the head of the family, could I keep the books? Yes! But I have chosen to *delegate* the responsibility to her. Sometimes when she's unsure of what to pay due to unexpected expenses, we sit down *together* to work it out.

Headship also includes planning, *goals*, decisions, sensitivity, and accountability. As we saw earlier, the Scriptures declare that *husbands* should dwell with their wives "according to knowledge" (I Peter 3:7). But it is also prudent for *wives* to do the same. Men and women function with *different* operating systems. That's how God created us. Men are *goal* oriented. Whether it's a project around the house or a trip across the country, they have to *conquer!*

Ladies, the next time you attend a family reunion, merely wander over to where the men have gathered and you'll see what I mean. The conversation will probably go something like this: "Yep, Ned, I made it in 7 hours and 22 minutes this trip." "Why that's 20 minutes

faster than last time.” To which Grandpa adds: “I remember the time when it took two days to travel that many miles.” So then, when your husband is striving toward a goal, it doesn’t necessarily indicate he’s neglecting to pay attention to you, he’s merely meeting his objective!

The Holy Spirit deemed it necessary to instruct husbands to dwell with their wives “according to knowledge,” simply because men have a tendency to be *insensitive*. This is further confirmed by Paul’s admonition to the Colossians: “Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them” (Col. 3:19). Insofar as a woman oftentimes thinks with her emotions, she has to *feel* at ease with herself before entering into important decisions. This is why most husbands experience a high level of *frustration* when they go shopping with their wives.

A short time ago upon returning home from a particularly lengthy trip, I said to my wife that I was dedicating an entire day to her—sightseeing, lunch, shopping, or any other way she would like to spend the day! She had been wanting to pick up a new blouse, so after lunch we made our way to a department store to look around. After searching through a couple of racks she finally found something that caught her eye. She tried it on, but decided she didn’t really care for it.

Twenty minutes later she held something up and asked me what I thought. Fabulous! Trying to be helpful, I said, “There’s a checkout counter right over here, dear.” However, she was still a little unsure about the selection, so she carried it around with her as we browsed a while longer. Of course, when I go shopping it’s directly to the aisle where the wrenches are located, then straight to the checkout—8 minutes flat! But shopping with my wife, who is guided by another principle,

I knew I needed to be *patient*. By the way, we left the store that day without making a purchase!

Bob Jones Sr. once said, “you can’t move without creating friction.” In short, if you move forward with a particular conviction, you’re going to create *friction*. With regard to the marriage relationship there would be a great deal less friction if husbands and wives lived within the guidelines of their roles and sought to *understand* one another more fully.

## The Heritage of the Lord

In addition to companionship, marriage provided the means through which the human race could *propagate* itself. Adam and Eve were to "...be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish [Heb. *to fill*] the earth..." This command has never been rescinded. In fact, following the flood it was reaffirmed with Noah and his family upon their arrival in the New World (Gen. 9:1).

In the days of Nimrod, when the whole earth was of one language, men sought to unite under the banner that there's strength in unity, that is, *apart* from God. As men attempted to build a city *contrary* to God's command, lest they "be scattered abroad," He confounded their language, scattering them across the face of the earth. This resulted in the formation of the *nations* as we know them today.

So then, it is God's will for mankind to bear children and *fill* the earth. The Scriptures have a great deal to say about conception, birth, and how to raise our children. Although there is an impressive array of books written on these subjects, *the Book* is the final authority in all matters of faith and practice.

### THE BLESSEDNESS OF LIFE

**"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him; and without Him was not any thing made that was made. In Him was life; and the life was the light of men" (John 1:1-4).**

The moral issues of life and death have always stirred the deepest emotional responses. As the battle over the

origin of life continues to rage between creation and evolution, one thing which has been lost in the discussion is the fact that only life can *generate* life. Life *cannot* emerge from inanimate things. The *theory* of evolution would have us believe that over billions of years “out of nothing came something” which gradually evolved into the present complex life forms on earth today.

The author of *Evolution in a Test Tube* states that life originated from inorganic (lifeless) chemicals: “This survival-of-the-fittest scenario takes place even at the level of molecules. On primordial [primeval or dateless past] Earth, chemicals with slight individual variations must have replicated themselves and competed with one another, scientists believe. The successful ones gave rise to the complex biological molecules that serve living organisms today.”

George Wald, the author of *The Physics and Chemistry of Life* emphatically declares: “One has only to contemplate the magnitude of this task to concede that the spontaneous generation [i.e. life somehow generated from slime or some other inorganic form] of a living organism is impossible. Yet here we are—as a result, I believe, of spontaneous generation.” Of course, evolutionists often oppose themselves as seen in Sir Fred Hoyle’s statement: “The likelihood of spontaneous formation of life from inanimate matter is one to a number of 40,000 noughts after it.”

Wow! You have to admit those are some weighty statements. As I read them a passage of Scripture immediately came to mind: “Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools.” Evolutionary thought lacks any *credible* evidence. It is all based upon assumptions, which have never been substantiated. Moreover, it should be noted that neither evolution nor creation can be proven

*scientifically*. Consequently, it essentially comes down to a matter of *faith*. Either we must place our faith in the *theory* of evolution, that life originated in a primitive soup of chemicals, or that God created all things. Since man is fallible and frequently prone to error we prefer to believe the biblical account of creation.

God created all things in heaven and earth in *six* literal twenty-four hour days. On the sixth day, He formed man from the dust of the earth and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life. However, that lifeless shell of clay only became a *living being* after God imparted the breath of life—"In Him was life." As a procreation of God, man has the ability, as He wills, to *reproduce* life through the natural means of conception and birth. Thus, the marriage relationship provides the biological mechanism to produce offspring.

**"Lo, children are an heritage of the LORD: and the fruit of the womb is his reward. As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man; so are children of the youth. Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them: they shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate" (Psa. 127:3-5).**

Children are the *Lord's* inheritance—they belong to Him. If He blesses us with the pitter-patter of little footsteps around the house, He expects us to raise our children to be instruments of praise and thanksgiving. Children are likened to arrows in the hand of a mighty man; they demonstrate the *strength* of our youth while *advancing* the fulfillment of God's purpose to fill the earth. "Happy [or blessed] is the man that hath his quiver full of them." In David's day a quiver held about twelve arrows. So, happy is the man who has *twelve* children!

## TRAINING UP A CHILD

**“Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise; That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth. And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord” (Eph. 6:1-4).**

Notice the apostle commands children to *obey* their parents. In other words, it isn't something that comes natural to a child. That little bundle of joy has an *old nature*, which sometimes is mean, deceptive, talks back, throws temper tantrums, and can be down right obnoxious. If you're a parent, we need say no more. But how do we *train* our children to obey without hog-tying and gagging them until they're twenty-one?

The popular humanistic approach of our day says, let children *express* themselves, never spank them, simply because you may inhibit them for life. This philosophy, however, causes children to become assertive and in some cases even demanding. Today, children are running their parents for the most part. They quickly learn how to *manipulate* their parents to get their way—the old nature is crafty even at a young age!

Probably most of us have had this same experience at one time or another while shopping at a supermarket: You pass a mother leisurely pushing a cart down an aisle with a sweet little three year old enjoying the ride. The next time you pass them this little guy has turned into a Jekyll and Hyde screaming at the top of his lungs because he wants out of the cart. Desperate, mom tries reasoning with her three year old, if that's possible: “Honey, mommy's going to tell daddy.” He already knows though that daddy will only raise his voice.

As the screaming intensifies she attempts a new tactic: “If you stop crying, mommy will buy you an ice cream cone.” But he normally gets his way plus the ice cream treat!! By now, most are headed for the exits as she tries the sympathy approach: “You’re going to make mommy cry.” Meanwhile, you’re standing there thinking someone should be crying here, but it should not be mom. *Embarrassed*, she finally gives in and finds herself chasing her persistent little guy through the store. He has effectively *expressed* himself.

As we have seen, children are a *gift* from the Lord. Thus, they should be a blessing, not a cause for concern. A child must be properly *trained* during those early developmental years or the parents will reap a whirlwind when he reaches his teen years. The mistake most parents make is waiting to administer disciplinary action until after their son or daughter turns fifteen. The crucial period for training a child to be *obedient* is from birth to about ten years of age. There is a timeless principle found in the Book of Proverbs that if applied consistently will save parents a lot of heartache.

**“Train up a child [Heb. *na’ar*—infancy to adolescence] in the way he should go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it” (Prov. 22:6).**

Interestingly, Solomon uses the term “train” here rather than teach. Of course, we teach our children the difference between right and wrong on a daily basis, but they must be *trained* to apply what they have been taught. The Hebrew word “train” has the idea to mold the character, drill, make obedient to orders. Parents are to establish *rules* of acceptable behavior for their children to obey and if they fail to be obedient the proper discipline should be administered. Sadly, most times

the family pet is more obedient to instructions than the children who live in the same house.

According to the Scriptures, the proper form of *discipline* should be the application of the *rod*. “Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him” (Prov. 22:15). In short, a good spanking at the *seat* of the matter effectively teaches the child that there are *consequences* for breaking the rules. Although most parents feel like their hearts are being torn out, it is far better for godly parents to discipline their children than the *State Department of Corrections* when they become young adults. They won’t be as understanding.

Moms and dads must never allow their children to *embarrass* them in public, although it has happened to us all. The remedy at our house was always to give a spanking in the presence of others for unruly behavior. Once your children are embarrassed a couple of times, they won’t be so inclined to act up. I know, I know, those crocodile tears can tug at your heart. But which would you prefer: That your children shed tears while they are growing up as result of your loving discipline, or for you to shed tears over their *rebellious* actions when they come of age?

While a child ought to be consistently disciplined, he should *never* be abused in any way. Children should obey out of love and respect, not fear. Paul adds: “And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord” (Eph. 6:4). This phrase may seem passing strange at first, especially since mothers spend the lion’s share of the time with the little ones. But ultimately the fathers will be held *accountable* at the Judgment Seat of Christ in regard to whether or not their children were brought up in the things of the Lord.

George Douglas writes these insightful words: “A father is neither an anchor to hold us back, nor a sail to take us there, but always a guiding light whose love shows us the way.”

Inasmuch as fathers have a tendency to be overbearing, Paul cautions dads to be very careful that they don't provoke or *exasperate* their children. Fathers are prone to let things slide for months until something triggers an overreaction, which results in some form of unreasonable discipline. We call this *changing* the rules.

Imagine if you attended a baseball game and every inning the rules of the game *changed*. Instead of three strikes and you're out, the batter is given five strikes before he's out. But when the home team comes to bat the umpire revises the rules making two strikes an out. Before long you would be so frustrated that you'd throw your hands up in *exasperation*. But this is oftentimes exactly what happens in the home. Once the rules are established they must be *consistently* applied. If the kids aren't permitted to swing from the chandeliers, then if they are caught doing so, they should be *immediately* disciplined.

## **HONOR THY FATHER AND MOTHER**

Both fathers and mothers have a God-given responsibility to *teach* their children the ways of the Lord. Not simply drilling them with the Scriptures or merely imparting a bunch of facts, but encouraging them to make the Word of God a part of their lives. The best teacher always serves as a *guide*. There's a little passage tucked away in the Old Testament that will help give us some direction:

**“And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And**

**these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.” (Deut. 6:5-7).**

Although these instructions were given to Israel under the law, we can glean from these passages another time-honored principle. Our walk through life gives us thousands of opportunities and object lessons to share with our children the *handiwork* of God. Here are some suggestions.

If you're *sitting* around a crackling fire at home, it's a great time to teach those little ones that have gathered at your feet how God delivered Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego from the fiery furnace. Think of it, not a hair on their heads was singed. If you're *walking* along the rim of the Grand Canyon, what a great opportunity to share with the kids that the Grand Canyon wasn't carved out by the Colorado River over billions of years as evolutionary geologists tell us. Rather, it was formed in the days of Noah when God judged the earth with a cataclysmic *universal* flood (Psa. 104:6-9).

If mom and dad pray before they *retire* every evening the little ones soon learn the *importance* of prayer. Challenge them to pray about what area of *full-time* service the Lord might use them some day. Around the breakfast table in the morning the conversation might go something like this: "Just think, heaven could be astir at this very moment. Perhaps *today* is the day the Lord will return."

**"Honor thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise; That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth" (Eph. 6:2-3).**

There are two benefits when children *honor* their parents. Paul begins by stating, “that it may be well with thee.” In short, if a child honors his parents he will have a *good conscience* that he has done right by them and also glorified God. The second benefit is the *promise* of prolonged years made reference to by the phrase: “thou mayest live long on the earth.” This does not mean that all young people who die at an early age necessarily dishonored their parents. It does mean they will *escape* many of the pitfalls of life that *could shorten* their lives.

For example, a young man who heeds the warning of his parents that speed kills, will never lose his life because he was driving too fast. If a daughter obeys her parents never to get into a car with a stranger, the likelihood of her being a murder victim is greatly diminished.

Parents should consider taking their ten, eleven, and twelve year olds to a rescue mission. I’ve preached a number of times at the *Pacific Garden Mission* in Chicago and came away profoundly touched by the experience. You witness firsthand how the sins of immorality, alcoholism, gambling, and drug abuse destroy lives. Thankfully, many of these poor souls have come to know Christ, but they must live with the consequences of their *disobedience*.

**“Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right” (Eph. 6:1).**



## Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage

A study on the institution of marriage would be incomplete without addressing the subject of *divorce* and *remarriage*. Sometimes the saints find themselves in a set of circumstances that are beyond their control. For those who may be reading these lines that are divorced we want you to know God loves you, and that it is His will for you to continue to live a *productive* Christian life to the praise of His glory.

The last thing someone needs who has gone through a painful divorce is to be criticized or neglected by the local assembly, although sadly, this is often the case. They are already brokenhearted over the matter. What they need is our *compassion* and a helping hand to pull their lives back together. With God's help, we want to explore what the Scriptures teach regarding divorce and remarriage during the dispensation of Grace. May we all humbly submit ourselves to the counsel of His will.

**“And unto the married I command, yet not I, *but the Lord*, Let not the wife depart from her husband: But and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband: and let not the husband put away his wife” (I Cor. 7:10,11).**

### THE CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE

Here, it is imperative to remember that we are no longer under the law, but under *grace*. As we know, God raised up a new apostle and commissioned him to go to the Gentiles. Thus, we must look to the Apostle Paul for our marching orders today. In his epistles we have the commands of Christ concerning the *regulations* for the marriage relationship, which should be of particular

interest to those of us who rightly divide the Word of truth. Having dealt with the issue of celibacy, Paul now presents various dilemmas the members of the Body of Christ could find themselves embroiled in, along with the *proper* response.

With the change in dispensations the Lord imparted a *new* revelation to the apostle in regard to believers in Christ. When a *saved* man and woman have been united in holy matrimony, they are bound together until death do them part according to verses 10 and 11. Since couples who know the Lord are *equally yoked* together it is the *directive* will of God that they *never* divorce. This is why it's essential that young couples who are contemplating marriage make sure that they are prepared to enter into a *lifelong* commitment. May we remind the reader again of the solemn words of the traditional wedding ceremony that *marriage* is “not to be entered into unadvisedly or lightly; but reverently, discreetly, advisedly, *and in the fear of God.*”

But what if a serious problem arises in the marriage? For example, if a wife finds herself in an abusive relationship she has every right to *separate* from her husband until he gets help. She should never place herself or her children in harm's way. A wife isn't a punching bag; she's created in the image of God. Mark these words and mark them well, a husband who strikes his wife is striking the image of God. In the event her husband refuses the counsel of a godly pastor, and continues in his sinful behavior, the wife can remain *separated* until a time of repentance. However, she is not permitted to divorce him.

When marital problems arise, it is always preferable for both the husband and wife to attend counseling sessions *together*. There still must be contact between the

couple, in a controlled environment, if they ever hope to resolve the problem. A counselor is indispensable at such times since he serves as an *impartial* mediator. God has given him the tools to find a biblical solution to the problem.

If her husband comes to the point where he sees the error of his ways and repents, she should be more than willing to *reconcile*. Grace will always *forgive* the erring party. As the apostle says: "Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man [or woman] have a quarrel [complaint] against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye" (Col. 3:13).

As we continue, suppose for a moment that a believing wife commits *adultery* with another man. She's trapped in the snare of Satan and habitually living in sin. In order that she might understand the gravity of her sinful lifestyle her husband should immediately *separate* from her until a time of *repentance*. Once again, divorce is not an option for the believer in Christ. Although the experience may be painful, the wounds deep, *grace* will follow the instructions of the Spirit: "And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you" (Eph. 4:32).

In both of the above cases, Christian couples who experience unforeseen problems have one of two options, either *separate* or be *reconciled* to one another (I Cor. 7:11).

But what about Christian couples who have divorced and one or both the husband and wife have *remarried*? Perhaps they were unaware of these instructions. This matter falls under the realm of the *permissive* will of God. Since past actions "belong to the ages" our counsel is always the same. Paul states: "Brethren, I count

not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, **forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before**, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 3:13,14).

In other words, you cannot change the past, but you can apply the above marital regulations to your *present* marriage. God’s *forgiveness* extends to broken relationships. The believer may not be perfect in this life, but he is *forgiven*.

Those who find themselves in these circumstances have often shared with us that while they are somewhat reluctant to hold positions of leadership, the Lord has used them greatly in other areas of service. Indeed, there are ten thousand things that need to be accomplished for Christ and *every* member of His Body should be helping in the cause, including those who are picking up the pieces of a shattered relationship. Our prayer is that God will burden our local assemblies to *actively* pursue ways to make these weary souls feel a part of the ministry.

### **THE UNEQUALLY YOKED MARRIAGE**

**“But to the rest speak I, not the Lord: If any brother hath a wife that believeth not, and she be pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away. And the woman which hath an husband that believeth not, and if he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him. For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy” (I Cor. 7:12-14).**

Paul’s phrase, “But to the rest speak I, not the Lord...” isn’t any less authoritative than that which has gone before. The inspired apostle is merely showing that in

the previous passages he had received a *direct* revelation from the Lord. Now in light of these *new conditions*, Paul addresses another marital issue under the direction of the Holy Spirit (vs. 40).

Here we are introduced to an *unequally yoked* marriage. “The woman which hath an husband that believeth not, and if he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him.” This may be a case where two unbelievers have married but in the course of time one of them comes to know Christ as their personal Savior. Some might conclude that since they are now unequally yoked the believing partner should forsake the marriage. However, just the *opposite* is true. If the unbelieving partner is willing to continue the relationship the believer is not to depart.

According to the Scriptures, “the unbelieving husband is *sanctified* [i.e. set apart to the marriage, not salvation] by the wife...else were your children unclean; but now are they holy.” In short, God *honors* the marriage for the sake of the believer. Moreover He classifies any children born of the relationship to be legitimate. Thus, every attempt should be made, by God’s grace, to make the marriage work.

This arrangement serves a twofold purpose. In addition to the children having the opportunity to be raised by their *natural* parents, the unbelieving husband may be *won* to the Lord. Paul poses the question: “For what knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband?” (I Cor. 7:16). Of course, a believing wife has no power to save her husband, but she may deliver him from the judgment to come through her faithful *testimony*. The likelihood of her husband being converted to Christ is much greater since he’s repeatedly exposed to the gospel.

Perhaps a word of caution should be added here for those who may be living with an unsaved loved one. Never badger an unbeliever with the gospel, this will only serve to alienate him from the Lord. We recently read about one lady who stuffed her husband's newspapers with *tracts*. Every time he opened them he was showered with the gospel. When this didn't work she tuned his car radio to the Christian radio station every morning. While these are ingenious methods, an unbelieving husband will sooner be won to Christ through the godly *example* of his wife. Peter gives us these insightful words:

**“Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation [behavior] of the wives; While they behold your chaste conversation [behavior] coupled with fear” (I Pet. 3:1,2).**

## REMARRIAGE

There are many pastors who feel that remarriage is *impermissible* under any circumstances. While we hold their convictions in high regard, we believe that the apostle gives liberty to *remarry* under certain circumstances. Let's suppose that a believing wife has sought to be faithful to her husband, but he's fed up after two or three years with all this “religion.” He hadn't bargained to be married to a “religious fanatic” who will no longer participate in drunken binges or cheat on their taxes—he wants *out!* Thus there is a willful desertion on *his* part. Under these circumstances the apostle gives the following counsel.

**“But if the unbelieving depart, let him depart. A brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases: but God hath called us to peace” (I Cor. 7:15).**

It seems clear to us from this passage that if the *unbeliever* files for a divorce, “let him depart.” Insofar as the circumstances are *beyond* the believer’s control “a brother or sister is not under bondage in such cases....” Some have concluded that the *bondage* here is a reference to the bondage of sin. However, the immediate context isn’t addressing the sin question, but *marriage*. It is our firm conviction that the believer is *not bound* to the unequally yoked marriage. The opposite of bondage is *liberty*; therefore, the believer is at liberty to *remarry*, but only in the Lord (I Cor. 7:39). But how do we reconcile what the apostle says here in I Corinthians with Romans?

“Know ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law,) how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth? For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband. So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man” (Rom. 7:1-3).

First of all, we must remember that Romans and I Corinthians were both written during Paul’s early ministry. Since Paul received a *special revelation* from the Lord concerning the marriage relationship under grace (I Corinthians 7:10-16), this means that the passage under consideration in Romans 7 would have to be interpreted in light of Corinthians.

Of course, Paul’s uses the marriage relationship to show that we are free from the law just as a wife would be free from the law of marriage if her husband passed

away. Here it must be remembered that the Scriptures were primarily written to *believers*; therefore, it seems clear that the apostle has those in mind that were equally yoked together in the bonds of holy matrimony. However, he gives us a *further* revelation on the matter and goes into far more detail in I Corinthians 7 where an unequal situation may arise.

God always begins with the *ideal*. For example, under the law He only made a provision in the sacrificial system for “sins of ignorance.” Surely His chosen people would never sin against Him willingly (Lev. 4:27-29). But, in reality, they committed every sin under the sun, time and time again. Thus God graciously instituted the Day of Atonement to cover the sins of the nation. With regard to marriage, the standard has always been one man for one woman (Matt. 19:4-6). Nevertheless, under the law God permitted divorce because of the hardness of Israel’s heart.

Today, grace is to forgive the erring party that a reconciliation might take place. Furthermore, in the case of an unequally yoked marriage a new regulation has been added. If the unbeliever abandons the marriage the believing party is permitted to remarry, but only in the Lord (I Cor. 7:15,39). Essentially, God has called us to *peace*.

Although marriage is taken lightly these days, those of us who know the Lord should hold it in high esteem. These matters must be taken more seriously for the Lord’s sake, lest the Word of God be blasphemed. It is essential to teach our young people at an *early age* that they should only *date* and *marry* believers. “But that’s so narrow!” Be that as it may, but I’ve sat across the counseling table with too many shipwrecked lives. The stories are heartbreaking. It won’t seem so narrow if

your daughter comes home from college and says she's fallen madly in love with an unsaved young man who has a history of drug abuse.

Christian parents and local assemblies must begin to work in tandem to curb the increased divorce rate due to unequally yoked marriages, that is, those that are entered into *knowingly*. Those who have will usually be the first to tell you it's extremely difficult sledding.

We've all heard parents say that their son or daughter's involvement with an unsaved dating partner is purely platonic. But why encourage them to become *emotionally* involved in a relationship that can never be brought to fruition? When the time comes to break the relationship off the unbeliever simply won't understand, no matter how much explanation is given. Sadly, those who entangle themselves in this way usually end up in unequally yoked marriages.

The Scriptures present a clear line of teaching on this matter: "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers [partnerships, marriage, etc.]: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?" (II Cor. 6:14). God merely wants what is *best* for us. Our marriages can indeed stand the test of time if we will only obey the counsel of His will.

## **THE GOSPEL OF SALVATION**

The Word of God teaches, "The wages of sin is death!" Thus when Christ stepped across the stars into this world of sin and woe, death was powerless over Him. Christ knew no sin. He was the sinless, spotless Lamb of God; therefore death could not lay its icy grip upon the shoulder of our Lord.

Tell me then, how is it that at the end of His earthly ministry He's suffering and dying in shame and disgrace? You see, Christ wasn't dying for His sins, for *He knew no sin*. He was dying for *your sins* and *my sins* upon that cruel tree. Our sins and iniquities were laid upon Him that He might *redeem* us back to God through His precious blood.

Now God turns to a lost and dying world with the good news of Calvary. Simply believe that Christ died for your sins *personally*, and rose again the third day, and God will wonderfully save you from the wrath to come according to the riches of His grace. Do you know the joy of sins forgiven? If not, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved" (Acts 16:31; Romans 10:13; I Corinthians 15:3,4).

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## ENDNOTES

### *Chapter 2*

1. Catacomb: "A subterranean cemetery of galleries with recesses for tombs."

### *Chapter 3*

1. Approximately 35 million abortions have been performed in this country since the Roe vs. Wade Supreme Court decision.

2. **DISTAFF:** "A part of the spindle used in spinning wool (Prov. 31:19). The obscure Hebrew word may refer to a small disk at the bottom of the spindle used to make the wheel spin faster."

3. See Pastor Stam's *Commentary on Romans* for a more comprehensive study—Pages 352, 353.

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