

First Baptist Church, Tallassee

# THE BIBLE SPEAKS TO MARRIAGE

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*We purpose to support and uphold the ideal of the Christian home.  
A Christian marriage involves a man and woman, both believers,  
living according to Biblical principles, committed to each other  
exclusively for life, and seeking to rear godly children.*

*Church Principles, First Baptist Church*

## The Deal

*This notebook is designed to help you prepare for marriage, focusing on the Biblical perspective. After all, the Bible is the owner's manual for life provided by the manufacturer, God. A Christian marriage involves two believers, bound by covenant, living according to Biblical principles.*

*So, here's the deal... I'm asking you to separately read the verses in each section. Then answer the questions at the end of each section. Don't skip ahead. Take your time and allow your mind to thoroughly process each section before moving to the next. After that, get together and discuss your answers. Discuss not only how you answered each question, but also why you did so. When you come back for your next appointment with me, we can discuss anything that surfaces. Most of the time, nothing will come up. But you will have thought through the matter of marriage for yourselves from a Biblical perspective. That is the ideal — to have a home that is Bible-based... and to think Biblically.*

*I am asking you to refrain from sexual relations until after the wedding. If you have already engaged in such relations, please stop now. It is more difficult to think through your relationship in an objective way and to prepare the spiritual foundation for marriage when you are involved on such a physical and subjective level. And... that is what the Bible teaches we should do.*

*At the back of the notebook, you will see information about the ceremony. You can choose from among various options for the different parts of the ceremony and combine them to set the level of formality and tone you prefer. You will also find information about additional resources you may find helpful.*

*Someone has said that a person becomes a Christian when they commit all that they know about themselves to all that they know about God. Christian growth is when we discover a gap between the two and make adjustments accordingly. The goal of this material is to help you increase your knowledge of both God and yourself. As that happens, you will have opportunities to grow. I hope you will take full advantage of these opportunities at this important juncture in your life.*

*Derek Gentle*

## The Glory of Marriage

*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." — Genesis 2:23*

There is a glory to marriage. Some of our best feelings are attached to the ideal of marriage. One thinks of companionship and intimacy, of children and growing old together, of love, and of joy. Little girls grow up planning their weddings and a young groom beams with pride over his new bride. In fact, there is such a glory to marriage that it is the relationship used in Scripture (in both Old and New Testaments) to picture Christ's special union with His people. This not only shows us the high regard which the Lord has for marriage, but can also give us insights in to how He wants our marriages to work.

### **Hosea 2:19-20**

*I will betroth you to me forever; I will betroth you in righteousness and justice, in love and compassion. I will betroth you in faithfulness, and you will acknowledge the Lord*

**In Hosea, the Lord compares His relationship to His people to a marriage. Look at the verses above and list some qualities of the Lord's "marriage" to believers:**

### **Ephesians 5:25-33** (Compare: Isaiah 54:5, Jeremiah 3:14, Revelation 19:7-9)

*25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, 26 that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, 27 that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.*

*31 "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." 32 This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church.*

**In the verses above, what kind of "bridegroom" is Jesus? What does He want in His relationship with His "bride," the church? List several descriptions below:**

## The Spiritual Aspect of Marriage

What does God have to do with marriage? Since we are His creations and are spiritual beings, the answer is everything! We have human spirits. God is Spirit. We commune with God spiritually – and, likewise, marriage involves not only a physical union, but also communion of our human spirits. This is not a union of only our two romantic selves. This is a union of the totality of our beings. All of one is joined to all of the other.

**Mark 10:7-8**, New International Version

*'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.'* So they are no longer two, but one.

Marriage is a communion that goes clear through to our spirits. The sharing is at a supernatural level. First John speaks of the relationship of believers to each other. If this principle holds true for our relationship to fellow Christians in general, how much more so to a Christian couple?

**1<sup>st</sup> John 1:7**

*But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another...*

People who are walking with Jesus are in fellowship, not only with the Lord, but with each other — *we have fellowship with one another*. In the Bible, fellowship is a term used to describe a relationship based on things held in common. The word pictures companionship, partnership, and sharing.

First John states it positively; Second Corinthians states it negatively...

**2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 6:14-16**

*Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will dwell in them And walk among them. I will be their God, And they shall be My people."*

**Would you say that your relationship, to this point, has been based more on a physical, emotional, or spiritual connection? Why? If a blend of two, which ones?**

**Amos 3:3**

*Can two walk together, unless they are agreed?*

Someone has described Christian fellowship as “two fellows in the same boat... rowing in the same direction.” A Christian marriage cannot be any less!

In a Christian marriage, a couple builds their lives on this common foundation — with a common Master, a common mission, and seeking to go in a common direction. Without a mutual relationship to Christ, they are already headed in different directions, and the deepest level of communion, the kind that people long for in marriage, isn't even possible.

For this kind of union to work well, each of the two people involved have to understand it as such. They need to have a shared approach to thinking about things, feeling about things, and to making life's choices. A marriage needs agreement in how we will spend our money, what is acceptable recreation, how we are going to rear the children, how much time we will spend at church, and so on. Will the Bible have the final say — in practice? Will Jesus really be at the center of our home?

A Christian *marriage* begins with two Christians. A Christian *wedding* is a covenant ceremony in which two Christians bind themselves to live together according to the principles of the Bible. They are vowing to live together for the Lord

**How closely does this description of marriage align with what you had pictured in your mind? As you read this description, what is your emotional reaction? Does it sound like what you have always dreamed of? Or does it sound boring?**

## How a Person Becomes a Christian

**We were created by God in His image with value and purpose. We can have a relationship with God that is real and meaningful.**

**The Bad News:** Sin entered the world, hindering our relationships with others and with God. We are still able to know right from wrong, but not always. Our “want to” is broken; we are unable to make ourselves always do the right things. Because we continue to think, speak, and act in ways we want instead of in the ways God wants, we are sinners.

God’s standard requires that we make a 100 on His test; a 99 will not do. The Bible says, “*For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become guilty of all of it*” (James 2:10, RSV). Some of us have done worse than others, but “*All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God*” (Romans 3:23).

**The Good News:** God in His love, has revealed Himself to us. There is nature. His commandments show us His perfect standard. However, He revealed Himself most when He came to earth and was born a real human being. That is who Jesus is.

**God Himself came to our rescue as Jesus died on the cross as our substitute.** He paid the penalty that we couldn’t pay. Jesus personally accepted our punishment and “*bore our sins in His own body*” (1st Peter 2:24)

**A relationship with God is available, but it is not automatic.** What Jesus did on the cross is like a bridge to God...but one must still cross the bridge. One could stand and admire its construction, yet, still not use the bridge to get to the other side.

**God works in our hearts** to get us across that bridge. He “convicts” us of sin. Conviction is a good kind of guilt that makes us face our need and drives us to God. The Lord also “calls us,” attracting us to Himself. We sense an inward pull toward Him.

**We must respond to God in repentance and faith.** Repentance is an “attitude change” in which we turn to God and from self—that is, from our self-centeredness and sins (Acts 3:19). It is not about self-improvement (because self is the problem).

Faith is more than just believing things about God. Instead, faith is trusting Jesus Christ to do for you what you cannot do for yourself. You cannot get your own sins forgiven, or get yourself into heaven, or make yourself right with God. The new life God offers is a free gift (Romans 5:15, 6:23). We do not deserve it, we cannot achieve it, but we can only receive it... in Jesus.

**How would you describe your relationship with God? What do you want it to be like? Have you received Jesus Christ (as described above) or do you need to receive Jesus? If you have already received Jesus, are you walking in the light?**

## The Purposes of Marriage

### 1. To Bring Glory to God

#### **1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 10:31**

*So whatever you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.*

#### **1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 9:19-20**

*Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought with a price. Therefore, honor God with your body.*

**Is it realistic to say that our marriages should be done to the glory of God? Why or why not?**

### 2. Companionship and Oneness

#### **Genesis 2:18**

*The Lord God said, 'It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.'*

**Reflect on the things you two have in common. As you share in these things, how do you see the hand of God at work?**

### 3. Sexual Fulfillment and Pleasure

#### **Genesis 2:24**

*For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.*

#### **Proverbs 5:18-19**

*May your fountain be blessed, and may you rejoice in the wife of your youth. A loving doe, a graceful deer - may her breasts satisfy you always, may you ever be captivated by her love.*

**1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 7:2-5**

*But since there is so much immorality, each man should have his own wife, and each wife her own husband. The husband should fulfill his marital duty to his wife, and likewise the wife to her husband. The wife's body does not belong to her alone but also to her husband. In the same way, the husband's body does not belong to him alone, but also to his wife. Do not deprive each other, except by mutual consent and for a time so that you may devote yourselves to prayer. Then come together again, so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.*

**Reading through the verses above, how does God view sex? A necessary evil? As something dirty? As an important part of marriage and something to be enjoyed? What other insights do you see concerning sex and marriage in the passages above?**

**4. To Rear Godly Children**

**Genesis 1:28**

*God blessed them and said to them, 'Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. . .'*

**Psalms 127:3, NAS95**

*Behold, children are a gift of the LORD, The fruit of the womb is a reward.*

**Malachi 2:15**

*Has the Lord not made them [married couples] one? In flesh and spirit, they are his. And why one? Because he was seeking godly offspring. . .*

*Compare: Ephesians 6:4, Titus 2:4, Deuteronomy 4:9, 6:7, Proverbs 22:6*

**In these verses, how do we know God's intentions are for us to have children? Underline the key phrases that make the point. According to the verses above, what is God's goal as we rear our children?**

## 5. To Become Teammates in Christian Service

### **Acts 18:26**

*He [Apollon, who at that time, was a sincere preacher but with incomplete information] began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they invited him to their home and explained to him the way of God more adequately.*

### **Romans 16:3-5**

*Greet Priscilla and Aquilla, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus. They risked their lives for me. Not only I but all the churches of the Gentiles are grateful to them. Greet also the church that meets in their house.*

**If Christians are to do everything for the glory of God, it would naturally fall to reason that this would include how a married couple would work together in serving the Lord. Was this a part of how you had marriage pictured in your mind? We see an example of such a couple in the Bible in Priscilla and Aquilla. List some specific ways you would like to see this happen in your marriage. Then, compare your lists with each other.**

## The Covenant of Marriage

Marriage is a relationship, designed by God, to last as long as both partners are living. You are not married because you are in love, but because you entered into a covenant. Nor is the covenant over because the feeling is gone. When you exchange vows in a Christian wedding, you are entering into a covenant that, in the eyes of God, makes you married. God regards this as a lifetime pledge and exposes divorce as an act of violence that betrays the marriage covenant.

### **Malachi 2:14, 16**

*...The LORD has been witness between you and the wife of your youth, with whom you have dealt treacherously; Yet she is your companion and your wife **by covenant**... And let none deal treacherously with the wife of his youth. For the LORD God of Israel says that He hates divorce, for it covers one's garment with violence," Says the LORD of hosts. "Therefore take heed to your spirit, that you do not deal treacherously."*

### **Matthew 19:3-9**

*Some Pharisees came to him to test him. They asked, 'Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any and every reason?' 'Haven't you read,' he replied, 'that at the beginning the Creator made them male and female, and said, For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh? So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate.' 'Why then,' they asked, 'did Moses command that a man give his wife a certificate of divorce and send her away?' Jesus replied, 'Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard. But it was not this way from the beginning. I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, and marries another, commits adultery.'*

### **1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 7:39**, Weymouth

*A woman is bound to her husband during the whole period that he lives; but if her husband dies, she is at liberty to marry whom she will, provided that he is a Christian.*

*(Compare Romans 7:2-3)*

### **1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 7:10**

*To the married I give this command (not I, but the Lord): a wife must not separate from her husband. But if she does [a provision for protection in hard cases such as abuse], she must remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband.*

**Are you getting married with the idea that if it isn't all you want it to be you can just bail out in a few years? I didn't think so. List the reasons you are planning to stick with your fiancé:**

## The Exclusiveness of Marriage

Marriage is a unique bond between one man and one woman in which all sexual and certain emotional needs are to be met exclusively. This bond is spiritual as well as psychological and physical. Stated positively, this union is to be enhanced and strengthened. Stated negatively, it has to be protected from all invaders and usurpers.

### Some threats to the marriage union include:

- **Failing to “Cut the Apron Strings”**

**Genesis 2:24**

*For this reason, a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife...*

**Picture in your mind how you expect your relationship with your parents to be like after marriage. List your descriptions here:**

- **Going to Another Person for the Emotional Bonding and Support You Should Be Finding in Your Spouse**

Most sexual affairs begin as two people first become emotionally involved through personal conversations – conversations that should be taking place between husband and wife. This may involve spending time with someone who “appreciates” you “as a person,” who compliments you, or who sympathizes with you about the problems in your marriage. Spending time with someone besides your spouse who will “listen” and “understand,” being “a shoulder to lean on,” etc. can be hazardous to your marriage.

**Proverbs 5:3**

*For the lips of the adulteress drip honey, and her speech is smoother than oil; but in the end she is bitter as gall, sharp as a double-edged sword.*

**Proverbs 6:24**

*[God’s commands are helpful in] . . . Keeping you from the smooth tongue of the wayward wife.*

**Proverbs 7:21**

*With persuasive words she [the adulteress] led him astray; she seduced him with her smooth talk.*

Avoid being caught up and emotionally involved with someone other than your spouse. Do not allow yourself to get into situations where that could happen.

**Proverbs 5:8**

*Keep to a path far from her [the adulteress], do not go near the door of her house.*

**Proverbs 7:25**

*Do not let your heart turn to her ways or stray into her paths.*

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*Do not let your heart turn to her ways or stray into her paths.*

**List some specific ways being married will change how you relate to the opposite sex in every day life:**

- **Adultery**

This includes:

- ◇ **An Affair**

**Hebrews 13:4**

*Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and the sexually immoral*

**Proverbs 6:25**

*Do not lust in your heart after her beauty [that of the immoral woman] or let her captivate you with her eyes.*

- ◇ **Using the Services of a Prostitute**

**1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 6:16-18**

*Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ himself? Shall I take the members of Christ and unite them with a prostitute? Never! Do you not know that he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her in body? For it is said, 'The two will become one flesh.' But he who unites himself with the Lord is one with him in spirit. Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body.*

- ◇ **Homosexual Acts**

**Leviticus 18:22**

*Do not lie with a man as one lies with a woman; that is detestable*

*Compare: Romans 1:26-27*

Similarly forbidden are the sins of incest (Leviticus 18, 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 5) and bestiality (Leviticus 18:23)

◇ **Pornography and/or Fantasy - a Form of Adultery**

**Matthew 5:27-28**

*You have heard that it was said, 'Do not commit adultery.' But I tell you that whoever looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.*

You may find these behaviors to be strange things to list for an engaged couple. You are so in love that none of these things would occur to you. However, we are planning for an entire lifetime of marriage. Your vows specifically include the avoidance of these things in any form. It is good to be clear on our promises up front. Do not do these things nor tolerate them in your marriage.

- **To enhance and protect your marriage union, you will have to work at finding emotional and sexual fulfillment in your spouse only.**

**Proverbs 5:15, 18-19**

*Drink water from your own cistern, running water from your own well. . . May your fountain be blessed and you rejoice in the wife of your youth. A loving doe, a graceful deer - may her breasts satisfy you always, may you ever be enraptured by her love.*

**Looking over this list of invaders that attack marriages, consider your expectations concerning sex. What are you hoping it will be like? What will your personal policies be to keep yourself away from temptation. Write a sentence describing the attitudes about sex you hope to have as a couple.**

## Men and Women are Different

Look over the verses that follow. Be careful not to jump to conclusions based on present cultural biases. Instead, read the verses carefully. Notice the basic guiding principles concerning your role in the marriage, based on the verses.

### Men and Women are Different by Design

#### **Genesis 1:27**

*So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.*

#### **1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 11:8-12**, Weymouth

*Man does not take his origin from woman, but woman takes hers from man. For man was not created for woman's sake, but woman for man's... Yet, in the Lord, woman is not independent of man nor man independent of woman. For just as woman originates from man, so also man comes into existence through woman, but everything springs originally from God.*

### Men Have a Role in Marriage

#### **Ephesians 5**, selected verses

*25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her*

*28-29 So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church.*

*33 Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.*

#### **1<sup>st</sup> Peter 3:7**, New Living Translation

*In the same way, you husbands must give honor to your wives. Treat her with understanding as you live together. She may be weaker than you are, but she is your equal partner in God's gift of new life. If you don't treat her as you should, your prayers will not be heard.*

**Men, underline the key phrases above that describe the kind of love you should have for your wife.**

## Women Have a Role in Marriage

### **Ephesians 5:22-24**, New International Version

*Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.*

### **Titus 2:5**, New Living Translation

*...live wisely and be pure, to take care of their homes, to do good, and to be submissive to their husbands. Then they will not bring shame on the word of God.*

What is this submission stuff all about? It not about a woman pretending she is inferior or less intelligent, nor is it about being a doormat. It means that she adapts her plans and career to be a better wife for him. Whenever one sees the Bible speaking of a wife submitting, one also finds it speaking of the husband giving sacrificial love. Loving husbands who set the pace in their homes are easy to respect. (This is one of the reasons a woman should be careful to marry a man worthy of her respect.) The virtuous woman described in Proverbs 31 runs a home-based business and negotiates real estate deals with men. However, her priority is to be there for her husband.

### **Proverbs 31**, New Living Translation

*10-12 Who can find a virtuous and capable wife? She is worth more than precious rubies. Her husband can trust her, and she will greatly enrich his life. She will not hinder him but help him all her life.*

*16 She goes out to inspect a field and buys it; with her earnings she plants a vineyard.*

*24 She makes belted linen garments and sashes to sell to the merchants.*

*17-18 She is energetic and strong, a hard worker. She watches for bargains; her lights burn late into the night.*

*23 Her husband is well known, for he sits in the council meeting with the other civic leaders.*

*25-26 She is clothed with strength and dignity, and she laughs with no fear of the future. When she speaks, her words are wise, and kindness is the rule when she gives instructions.*

*30 Charm is deceptive, and beauty does not last; but a woman who fears the LORD will be greatly praised.*

**Women, look at the verses above and underline the characteristics of a good wife that you want to display.**

## Going To Church Together

The Bible makes it clear that we are created to live in community with other people. Christians are part of a family. There is no such thing as the “Lone Christian,” who rides the range of spiritual life without needing the fellowship or the help of other believers.

**Acts 2:42**, New Living Translation

*They joined with the other believers and devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, sharing in the Lord’s Supper and in prayer.*

**Hebrews 10:24-25**, New International Version

*And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.*

The Bible teaches that those who have a genuine relationship with the Lord have a desire to associate with God’s people. Likewise those who have no desire for Christian fellowship are giving evidence that they don’t have a relationship with the Lord.

**1<sup>st</sup> John 3:14**

*We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren...*

**1<sup>st</sup> John 2:19**, New Living Translation

*These people left our churches because they never really belonged with us; otherwise they would have stayed with us. When they left us, it proved that they do not belong with us.*

Sometimes, a couple is divided in their feelings about church attendance. There are four stages that they go through their dating and married years together. First the unbeliever says, “I want to be with you; sure I will go.” Second, the unbeliever says, “I wouldn’t care to go, but you go on ahead.” In the third stage, the unbeliever says, “Why don’t you stay home with me tonight?” And in the final stage, the unbeliever says, “I am tired of you spending all your time at church. You care more about church than you do about me!”

Being a faithful and vital part of a church family is a tremendous source of happiness for a couple. It is something they do together in the pursuit of a significant cause. It provides support and encouragement and examples and accountability. When they go through life’s storms, it will put them in close friendships with people who have already been through those storms and who can help them. It will later provide the right environment to rear children.

**What is your attitude toward church membership and attendance? How often do you think a person should attend church per week? Per month? How do you think your fiancé feels?**

## Attitudes & Words

Some people think that the biggest conflicts in marriage are about money, communication, and sex. Actually, underlying these symptoms are our attitudes. Read through the verses that follow. Underline the key phrases in each verse, especially those that describe the consequences of having a bad attitude or the advantage of having the right attitude.

### Anger

Someone told a preacher once that her temper was quick and loud, but over in a hurry. The preacher replied, “Yes, a shotgun is loud and over with quickly, too. But look at the damage it does!”

**Proverbs 14:17**

*A quick-tempered man acts foolishly, And a man of wicked intentions is hated.*

**Proverbs 16:32**

*He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, And he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city.*

**Proverbs 22:24**

*Make no friendship with an angry man, And with a furious man do not go*

**Proverbs 19:11**

*The discretion of a man makes him slow to anger, And his glory is to overlook a transgression.*

### Argumentativeness

Included here is always having to be right, belittling or correcting one’s spouse in front of others, and nagging.

**Proverbs 21:19**

*Better to dwell in the wilderness, Than with a contentious and angry woman.*

**Proverbs 26:21**

*As charcoal is to burning coals, and wood to fire, So is a contentious man to kindle strife.*

**Proverbs 17:14**

*The beginning of strife is like releasing water; Therefore stop contention before a quarrel starts.*

## Bitterness & Unforgiveness

Ruth Graham, the wife of the evangelist, says that a good marriage is made of two good forgivers.

### **Colossians 3:19**

*Husbands, love your wives and do not be bitter toward them.*

### **Ephesians 4:31-32**

*Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ forgave you.*

### **Hebrews 12:15**

*Looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled*

### **Colossians 3:13**

*Bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do.*

### **1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 13:5**

*...Love does not demand its own way. Love is not irritable, and it keeps no record of when it has been wronged.*

## Greed

One of the things married couples argue about most is money and how to spend it. Sometimes, because they want to have all the things in the early years that their parents spent years acquiring, a couple gets in financial trouble. Then, the pressure of debt creates stress in the marriage. A shared biblical attitude toward money helps produce harmony in a marriage.

### **Proverbs 15:27a, NIV**

*A greedy man brings trouble to his family...*

### **1 Timothy 6:10, New Living Translation**

*For the love of money is at the root of all kinds of evil. And some people, craving money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many sorrows.*

### **Ecclesiastes 5:10, New Living Translation**

*Those who love money will never have enough. How absurd to think that wealth brings true happiness!*

## Pride

There is a Southern expression for dealing with people with this quality: “You can’t tell him nothing.” Pride represents a self-centeredness and a degree of self-confidence that ignores the feelings and input of others.

### **Proverbs 28:25**

*He who is of a proud heart stirs up strife, But he who trusts in the LORD will be prospered.*

### **Proverbs 13:10**

*By pride comes nothing but strife, But with the well-advised is wisdom.*

### **Proverbs 16:18**

*Pride goes before destruction, And a haughty spirit before a fall.*

## Selfishness

Someone has defined selfishness as meeting my needs at someone else’s expense.

### **Philippians 2:3-4**, New American Standard, 1995 edition

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

## Stubbornness

Sometimes a person will complain about the anger of his or her spouse. Yet, sometimes, that person is also guilty of a provocation, that of being so persistently stubborn that it is absolutely maddening. A normally calm person can be driven to anger by the impossibility of reasoning with a quiet, controlling, stubborn mate. While nothing ever justifies physical or emotional abuse, neither is it OK to be “stubborn with a smile.”

### **Proverbs 18:1**

*A man who isolates himself seeks his own desire; He rages against all wise judgment.*

### **Proverbs 12:15**

*The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, But he who heeds counsel is wise.*

**We all struggle with our attitudes at time. In which of these areas do you feel yourself to be the most vulnerable? Which ones do you feel you struggle with the least? Compare notes with your fiancé.**

## The Power of Words in Marriage

Other than our faithfulness to our spouses, the most powerful marriage builder — or the most powerful destroyer of marriage — is our words. Sticks and stones may break my bones, but if you really want to hurt me, use words.

**Read the verses below. Then, make two lists. First, list the causes and powers of speaking the right words. Then, list the causes and dangers of speaking the wrong words.**

**Proverbs 18:21**

*Death and life are in the power of the tongue, And those who love it will eat its fruit.*

**Proverbs 15:4**

*A soothing tongue is a tree of life, But perversion in it crushes the spirit.*

**Proverbs 15:23**

*A man has joy by the answer of his mouth, And a word spoken in due season, how good it is!*

**Proverbs 29:20**

*Do you see a man hasty in his words? There is more hope for a fool than for him.*

**Proverbs 15:28**

*The heart of the righteous studies how to answer, But the mouth of the wicked pours forth evil.*

**Ephesians 4:29**

*Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers.*

**Causes & Powers of the Right Words**

**Causes & Powers of the Wrong Words**

## Fighting Fair

One of the surprises of marriage is that we, a couple so in love, could have this much conflict. There is a reason for it. The first year or two of marriage is filled with decisions about how “we” are going to do things. What are our holiday traditions? Who does what in the yard and who does what in the house? There are a million of these decisions to be made. So a couple spends months and months hammering these things out one issue at a time.

Marriage is the blending, not only of two persons, but of two distinct family backgrounds. Do we save the money or spend the money? One grew up in a family of savers and the other grew up in a family of spenders. Do we leave our toiletries on the counter for convenience or do we put the toothbrushes and shaving cream in the drawer for neatness? One comes from a convenience family, the other from a neat family. What we grew up with is what we think is *normal* — can’t the other see how normal our family’s way of doing this is? And that is where the friction comes in.

Because friction is the inevitable result of the blending of two people into one, they will have to know how to fight fair.

**Read and reflect on the verses below. Then, make a list of principles for fighting fair.**

### **James 1:19**

*So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath*

### **Ecclesiastes 7:9**

*Do not hasten in your spirit to be angry, For anger rests in the bosom of fools.*

### **Matthew 5:23-24**

*Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.*

### **Matthew 18:15**

*Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother.*

### **Romans 12:17**, New American Standard, 1995 edition

*Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. Respect what is right in the sight of all men.*

### **Romans 12:18**

*If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.*

**Ephesians 4:26**, New International Version

*“In your anger do not sin”: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry*

**James 5:16**, New International Version

*Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.*

**Luke 17:3**

*Take heed to yourselves. If your brother sins against you, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him.*

**My Ideas for our Rules for Fighting Fair:**

**After you have developed your thoughts, compare notes, and agree on some rules for fighting fair. Write them below:**

## When All Else Fails, Get Help!

All too often, one sees it happen. A couple is in marital trouble. One is indifferent. The other is begging (literally begging) the other for some focused attention. Please, “Let’s get marriage counseling,” this person pleads. But the indifferent partner is unwilling. After a while, the spouse who *had* wanted to save the marriage finds someone else — or just leaves. Suddenly, the indifferent partner is willing to go to a marriage counselor. The formerly indifferent partner is now the one doing the begging, feverishly trying to save the marriage. But the other spouse is now unresponsive and replies that the love is stone cold dead. If only the two had been willing to work on the marriage at the *same time*!

Every marriage will have its storms. Riding these storms out requires the readiness to forgive, a reasonable spirit, a willingness to yield, and a good measure of humility. Life’s greatest challenges can be met only with the greatest humility. This includes being humble enough to get help when it is needed.

### **Proverbs 1:5**

*A wise man will hear and increase learning, And a man of understanding will attain wise counsel*

### **Proverbs 12:15**

*The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, But he who heeds counsel is wise.*

### **Proverbs 15:22**

*Without counsel, plans go awry, But in the multitude of counselors they are established.*

### **Proverbs 19:20**

*Listen to counsel and receive instruction, That you may be wise in your latter days.*

### **Proverbs 20:5**

*Counsel in the heart of man is like deep water, But a man of understanding will draw it out.*

Why not agree before marriage to be willing to get help at the first sign of real trouble? Give some thought to the agreement below. Then, if you mean it, sign it.

**I promise to agree to get counseling promptly when my spouse seriously says that we need help. I will not refuse. This agreement is good forever.**

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

## Personality Profiles

**Rate each of these four styles from 1 to 4, 1 being the one most like you and 4 the one least like you:**

\_\_\_\_\_ **Visionary:** Make things happen (now!). Excel at communicating the vision, motivator, rally people around the cause. Instinctive decision-maker; won't shrink from the tough calls. Hates details. Are great before a group, but sometimes perceived as not warm with people one on one.

\_\_\_\_\_ **Analytical:** Detail oriented, unemotionally evaluate the facts and come to a logical conclusion, can detect problems before they happen, ask the hard questions, creative, and efficient. Content to remain in the background. Tempted to be too complex and to over-prepare.

\_\_\_\_\_ **Relational:** People person. Is the life of the party, leaving everyone feeling loved, heard, and understood. Love to organize people around a common cause and work their relational network, building coalitions. Hate paperwork, neglect details, and ignore anything on paper.

\_\_\_\_\_ **Faithful:** Keep on plugging, stable, predictable, low-key, make things run smoothly, good managers. Sometimes "invisible". Dislikes conflict and will do almost anything to avoid it. Better at maintaining and improving what already exists than creating something new.

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**Think about your fiancé and rate his or her style below. Later, compare notes.**

\_\_\_\_\_ **Visionary:** Make things happen (now!). Excel at communicating the vision, motivator, rally people around the cause. Instinctive decision-maker; won't shrink from the tough calls. Hates details. Are great before a group, but sometimes perceived as not warm with people one on one.

\_\_\_\_\_ **Analytical:** Detail oriented, unemotionally evaluate the facts and come to a logical conclusion, can detect problems before they happen, ask the hard questions, creative, and efficient. Content to remain in the background. Tempted to be too complex and to over-prepare.

\_\_\_\_\_ **Relational:** People person. Is the life of the party, leaving everyone feeling loved, heard, and understood. Love to organize people around a common cause and work their relational network, building coalitions. Hate paperwork, neglect details, and ignore anything on paper.

\_\_\_\_\_ **Faithful:** Keep on plugging, stable, predictable, low-key, make things run smoothly, good managers. Sometimes "invisible". Dislikes conflict and will do almost anything to avoid it. Better at maintaining and improving what already exists than creating something new.

## Spiritual Gifts

### Bonus Section

**What is your spiritual gift? Do you know? Look over the gifts below and see if you see your gift listed. Circle each gift you believe that you have and underline each one you believe your fiancé has.**

**Administration (or Governments):** The supernatural ability to organize resources and to mobilize people for effective ministry. This person has a clear sense of direction, communicates goals clearly, and is good at delegation. He stays on point in reaching goals and enjoys a challenge. He is distinguished from a natural leader in that He is Christ-centered in his goals and empowered by the Holy Spirit to lead in ministry.

**Discernment:** The supernatural ability to discern between that which is of God and that which is not and to detect the presence of evil people, evil spirits, evil motives, or false teaching. These people have a spiritual alarm system, which when needed, is loud and persistent. Discernment and a critical attitude should be distinguished.

**Evangelism:** The supernatural ability to relate to those who don't know the Lord, to initiate conversations about the Lord in a non-offensive way, and to explain the gospel in ways that are clear and persuasive. Such persons are marked by a greater burden for the lost and see results from their witness.

**Exhortation:** The supernatural ability to provide encouragement, motivation, comfort, and Biblical counsel. This person bears the presence of Christ and feels safe to be around. They come alongside to help with compassion, focusing on the person's potential in Christ.

**Giving:** The spiritual specialty of giving to the Lord generously from a selfless heart. God enables this person, not only to give money, but to earn it. This giving may be to individuals in need or it may be to ministries, but it is always in the name of Jesus.

**Helps (or Service):** The supernatural ability to give practical aid to others. This person has the disposition and ability to take the load of another and bear it in his place. It means to support and assist. This person has an eye to spot needs and is willing to do behind the scenes work. They look for ways to take routine jobs off of over-loaded leaders.

**Mercy:** The supernatural ability to show genuine compassion to those in distress, bringing them a presence that imparts peace and doing for them deeds that relieve suffering. They bear the presence of Christ. These people have a desire to help the hurting. They take an interest in people that others may ignore and are comfortable when with hurting people.

**Pastor and Teacher:** The supernatural ability to care for a group of believers spiritually, teaching them how to live the Christian life. This person will feed the flock, lead the flock, guard the flock, and find the wandering sheep. This gift has a dual nature; pastor (shepherd) and teacher (see below).

**Teaching:** The motivation and ability to impart Biblical truth through instruction. This person relishes studying the Bible — carefully researching passage backgrounds and word meanings. He or she takes pains to be accurate in doctrine and in explaining Scripture. People with this gift draw practical lessons from the passage itself and seeks ways to present them in ways to which people can relate.

*Learn more about spiritual gifts in Romans 12, Ephesians 4, and 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 12-14*

## 2000 Baptist Faith and Message, Article on the Family

### XVIII. The Family

God has ordained the family as the foundational institution of human society. It is composed of persons related to one another by marriage, blood, or adoption.

Marriage is the uniting of one man and one woman in covenant commitment for a lifetime. It is God's unique gift to reveal the union between Christ and His church and to provide for the man and the woman in marriage the framework for intimate companionship, the channel of sexual expression according to biblical standards, and the means for procreation of the human race.

The husband and wife are of equal worth before God, since both are created in God's image. The marriage relationship models the way God relates to His people. A husband is to love his wife as Christ loved the church. He has the God-given responsibility to provide for, to protect, and to lead his family. A wife is to submit herself graciously to the servant leadership of her husband even as the church willingly submits to the headship of Christ. She, being in the image of God as is her husband and thus equal to him, has the God-given responsibility to respect her husband and to serve as his helper in managing the household and nurturing the next generation.

Children, from the moment of conception, are a blessing and heritage from the Lord. Parents are to demonstrate to their children God's pattern for marriage. Parents are to teach their children spiritual and moral values and to lead them, through consistent lifestyle example and loving discipline, to make choices based on biblical truth. Children are to honor and obey their parents.

*Genesis 1:26-28; 2:15-25; 3:1-20; Exodus 20:12; Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Joshua 24:15; 1 Samuel 1:26-28; Psalms 51:5; 78:1-8; 127; 128; 139:13-16; Proverbs 1:8; 5:15-20; 6:20-22; 12:4; 13:24; 14:1; 17:6; 18:22; 22:6,15; 23:13-14; 24:3; 29:15,17; 31:10-31; Ecclesiastes 4:9-12; 9:9; Malachi 2:14-16; Matthew 5:31-32; 18:2-5; 19:3-9; Mark 10:6-12; Romans 1:18-32; 1 Corinthians 7:1-16; Ephesians 5:21-33; 6:1-4; Colossians 3:18-21; 1 Timothy 5:8,14; 2 Timothy 1:3-5; Titus 2:3-5; Hebrews 13:4; 1 Peter 3:1-7.*

On June 14th, 2000, the Southern Baptist Convention adopted a updated revised summary of our faith. The committee's report says in part:

*Baptist churches, associations, and general bodies have adopted confessions of faith as a witness to the world, and as instruments of doctrinal accountability. We are not embarrassed to state before the world that these are doctrines we hold precious and as essential to the Baptist tradition of faith and practice.*

*As a committee, we have been charged to address the "certain needs" of our own generation. In an age increasingly hostile to Christian truth, our challenge is to express the truth as revealed in Scripture, and to bear witness to Jesus Christ, who is "the Way, the Truth, and the Life."*

*It is the purpose of this statement of faith and message to set forth certain teachings which we believe.*

## Bible Translations Cited

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### **AMP: Amplified**

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### **ESV: English Standard Version**

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### **HCS: Holman Christian Standard Bible**

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### **NAS95: New American Standard Version**

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### **NIV: New International Version**

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### **NLT: New Living Translation**

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### **Wuest: The New Testament: An Expanded Translation**

By Kenneth S. Wuest. © 1961 William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.

### **WEYMOUTH: NEW TESTAMENT IN MODERN SPEECH**

by Richard F. Weymouth, 3rd Edition (1912)--Revised & edited E. Hampden-Cooke PUBLIC DOMAIN