



Truth For These Times



43. LOVE AND MARRIAGE

Marriage is one of the greatest blessings God has given to humanity. In the beginning it was God who gave Eve to Adam; thus the marriage institution comes to us with the sweet fragrance of the Garden of Eden. Unfortunately, all too often holy wedlock turns into an unholy deadlock, and that which God planned would be a blessing to humanity, becomes a curse. Can we have a happy home in an unhappy world? Is it possible for marriage to work? The Bible has answers.

CHOOSING A LIFE PARTNER

Houses are built by tradesmen, but a house and a home are two different things. Homes are made by people, and the vital ingredient for happiness is LOVE.

Genesis 2:18, 22-24 And the LORD God said, “*IT IS NOT GOOD THAT MAN SHOULD BE ALONE*; I will make him a helper comparable to him.” Then the rib which the LORD God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to 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 a man shall leave his father and mother AND BE JOINED TO HIS WIFE, and they shall become one flesh.

Eve was created from a rib taken from Adam signifying that she was not to control him as the head, nor to be trampled under his feet as an inferior, but to stand by his side as an equal, to be loved and protected by him. God chose Adam’s wife for him, and he gave him only one wife. When young people are considering marriage, it is wise to consult God in prayer, so that He can guide in making the right choice. If Christians followed God’s guidance on this point, and did not stubbornly insist on having their own way, there would be many more happy marriages. God knows what is best for us far more than we could possibly know. Samson, the strongest man who ever lived, unwisely chose the wrong marriage companion (twice) and his life was a misery because of it.

1 John 4:8 He who does not love does not know God, for GOD IS LOVE.

The very nature of God is love. Marriage must be founded on love otherwise it will never succeed. Some marriages are contracted on a counterfeit of love – infatuation. The motivation for many marriages is lust, sexual attraction, sympathy or just affection. Such a marriage is doomed before it is contracted. In a very short time the wedding bells will stop ringing.

1 Corinthians 13:4,5 LOVE suffers long *and* is kind; LOVE does not envy; LOVE does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, DOES NOT SEEK ITS OWN, is not provoked, thinks no evil.



God is love.

Love is a misused word. To many it is the call to natural drives, to others it cannot be discerned from mere infatuation. True love is not a mere emotion. It is not a fleeting sensation that will burn out in a few weeks. True love grows deeper and stronger as the years go by, whether times are good or bad. Genuine love will always endure. This is the long-range test. The short range testing is also

given here in 1 Corinthians 13. One of these tests is, “does not seek its own.” In other words love is unselfish kind and pure. Lust puts self first, but love puts self last. Sexual freedom is said to be love, but sex must be a creation of true love and not reversed. The Bible clearly denounces sex outside of the marriage bond. Sex is only to be practised by those in the bonds of marriage. We are living in a world today where the devil is selling lust as a counterfeit for love.

Proverbs 31:30 Charm *is* deceitful and BEAUTY IS PASSING, but a woman *who* fears the LORD, she shall be praised.



The value of a woman who loves God is above rubies.

Of course there must be a certain amount of physical attraction between couples – it would be wrong to marry someone you could not love, but a marriage that is based on physical beauty alone does not have the necessary ingredients for a successful marriage. In choosing a life partner, the most vital element to look for is “character”. If you choose a partner whose first devotion is to Christ, you can’t will be blessed. But if your first devotion is not to Christ, don’t expect such a partner.

2 Corinthians 6:14 DO NOT BE UNEQUALLY YOKED TOGETHER WITH UNBELIEVERS. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?

Paul is not specifically referring to a marriage partner here, yet the principle applies. It is God’s plan that Christians should marry Christians. So often this has not been the case, with the result that the Christian partner begins to backslide, also children born into the home are not trained in the way of the Lord as they ought, because of conflicting home influences. Neither is it wise for couples of strongly opposing denominations to marry.

Genesis 27:46; 28:1 And Rebekah said to Isaac, “I am weary of my life because of the daughters of Heth; if Jacob takes a wife of the daughters of Heth, like these *who are* the daughters of the land, what good will my life be to me?” Then Isaac called Jacob and blessed him, and charged him, and said to him: “YOU SHALL NOT TAKE A WIFE FROM THE DAUGHTERS OF CANAAN.”



A couple united in Christ lays the strongest foundation.

Many experience unhappiness because they have ignored this advice. Believers are to marry believers. This is God’s plan. How can He bless a marriage that He has forbidden? Not all unhappy marriages end up in divorce. Some couples simply tolerate one another, or stay together for the sake of the children. Some even think their situation is normal and are not aware of what happiness they are missing. If one marries a person who does not serve God he or she may find a home situation where the shadows are never lifted. The brightness of a happy home will not be present.

Amos 3:3 CAN TWO WALK TOGETHER, UNLESS THEY ARE AGREED?

Can two walk together unless they are agreed? The obvious answer is NO. However, don’t make the mistake of trying to find the perfect partner. Nobody is perfect. Look for one who has the right attitudes and high ideals. Look for the genuine Christian. Pray about it. God will be delighted to answer your prayers. He wants you to be happy.

DIVORCE

Matthew 19:3-9

The Pharisees also came to Him, testing Him, and saying to Him, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for *just* any reason?” And He answered and said to them, “Have you not read that He who made *them* at the beginning ‘made them male and female,’ and said, ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’? So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate.” They said to Him, “Why then did Moses command to give a certificate of divorce, and to put her away?” He said to them, “Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, permitted you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. And I say to you, **WHOEVER DIVORCES HIS WIFE, EXCEPT FOR SEXUAL IMMORALITY, AND MARRIES ANOTHER, COMMITS ADULTERY; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery.**”



Marriage is for life.

(See also Matt 5:31,32; Mark 10:2-12).

Marriage is meant for life – “till death do us part.” Modern society does not always see it this way. All too often it is till “divorce do us part”. God hates divorce, and only permitted it in the time of Moses because the people were hard hearted. God does not change – He is still against divorce. There are certain marriages where it becomes impossible for a couple to continue living together. Often alcohol or drugs makes it impossible for a wife to stay in the marriage because of physical or mental abuse. This can be regarded as unfaithfulness to the marriage vows. Moral impurity including adultery gives the innocent partner the right to divorce in the sight of God. Even here, it is better for a reconciliation to take place, but if this is not possible then divorce is Biblical.

HAPPINESS IN MARRIAGE

True marriage will bring the closest of relationships. The home of a happy Christian couple can be a haven for them in this world. Marriage can indeed be one of the greatest adventures in life.



We should serve one another as Jesus serves us.

Phil 2:3 *Let nothing be done* through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind **LET EACH ESTEEM OTHERS BETTER THAN HIMSELF.**

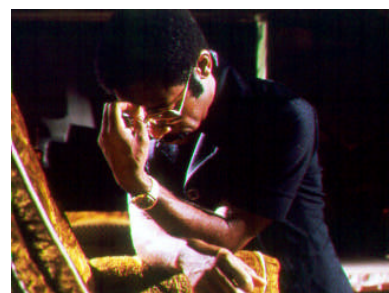
This is an exhortation of Paul to the believers in the church but how much more should it apply in the home. Rather than being selfish, we ought to consider the needs of our partner. This creates a pleasant co-operative atmosphere when it is practiced by both partners.

Romans 12:10 *Be* kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, **IN HONOR GIVING PREFERENCE TO ONE ANOTHER.**

Here is another recommendation against selfishness. If practised in the home it can only bring harmony. One reason for strained home relationships is that couples will not communicate. The only time they seem to communicate is when they argue or they lapse into silence for various periods of time. These periods of silence bring misunderstandings that can only be solved by communication. Remember, it always takes two to make an argument. If you have problems of misunderstandings talk them over in a non-argumentative way. Explain your point of view, but do it without anger. If you speak slowly and quietly it will help. One necessary part of communication is to listen and appreciate the other partner's point of view. If you argue, or sulk, seeking refuge in hurt silence, your problems will remain unsolved.

Ephesians 5:22-25,28,33 **WIVES, SUBMIT TO YOUR OWN HUSBANDS, AS TO THE LORD.** For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so *let* the wives *be* to their own husbands in everything. **HUSBANDS, LOVE YOUR WIVES,** just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her. So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. 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.

A husband and wife are meant to stand side by side and complement one another. The husband is the head but not the dictator – he is to love his wife. This means he will be considerate to his wife, and then she will react with kindness. Both will be absolutely loyal to each other, they will trust one another and tell the truth at all times. One way to wreck a marriage is to introduce a third party into the home, a friend, a mother in law or some other relative. The union between husband and wife is sacred and no third party should interfere.



The husband is the servant leader of the home, under Christ.

Proverbs 31:26 She opens her mouth with wisdom,
and **ON HER TONGUE IS THE LAW OF KINDNESS.**

Here is a woman to be admired, “on her tongue is the law of kindness.” Men would be wise to follow the same pattern. It is worth practising being kind in speech. Sometimes the tone of voice makes all the difference. How happy is the man who is married to such a woman as described in this verse, and how happy is a woman who is married to such a man who operates on the same principle. The gift may not be natural to you but it will be worth developing.

Ephesians 4:26 Be angry, and do not sin: **DO NOT LET THE SUN GO DOWN ON YOUR WRATH.**

Today we would say, “Don’t go to sleep at night without making things right between you.” It may be difficult but we should always be prepared to say, “I’m sorry.” It doesn’t always matter who is wrong, it is far better to be happy. It is better to win love than an argument. If you are quarreling, the best solution is to get down on your knees, put your arms around one another and pray. Pray for your own faults first, and then pray that you will love one another.

If you study the Bible together and pray together every day these problems will diminish as the years go by and marriage will become sweeter and sweeter. When Christ is first in the household, the members of the home will experience living in a haven of peace and happiness. The family that prays together plays together and works together will stay together in this life and the life to come. Together is the happiest word in the marriage vocabulary.

1 Corinthians 7:3-5 Let the husband render to his wife the affection due her, and likewise also the wife to her husband. The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband *does*. And likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife *does*. **DO NOT DEPRIVE ONE ANOTHER EXCEPT WITH CONSENT** for a time, that you may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again so that Satan does not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.



To pray and study God's Word alone and together will keep you strong in marriage.

Sex is a privilege of marriage. God invented sex. It is not dirty or wrong within the marriage bond. It is the ultimate expression of love between married couples and is an essential ingredient of true marriage. The abuse of this privilege outside of marriage is sin, but its intemperate use within marriage can be sin too. The advice of this text is that the husband and wife be not deprived of this privilege unless they both agree. Then it is advisable to continue normal marriage relationships; otherwise the abstinence may lead to immoral temptations.

One vital factor in marriage is to express love. If a husband loves his wife he should tell her. He can commend her for her cooking (if he can do so with a clear conscience), her housework, and her dress. If he praises her (not flatters) she will bloom. The wife can express her love to her husband in kind loving words. But remember **LOVE UNEXPRESSED DIES**.



Love unexpressed dies – speak and show your love.

It may be that you were married before you became a Christian, or didn't know of God's counsel concerning marriage to an unbeliever, and your partner is not a Christian. Many of the things mentioned in this lesson can still apply but some cannot. However, the Bible's counsel is that in such a case we should stay with the unbelieving partner and live the Christian life. By doing so we may influence the unbeliever, who will thus be led to conversion (see 1 Cor 7:12-16).

Then it may be that you are divorced on non-Biblical grounds. Should you stop living with your present husband or wife? No, of course not. You are not responsible to God before your conversion. In the time of your ignorance God casts a blind eye. He does, however, hold you responsible for your knowledge and application of the truth. God is prepared to forgive your past. 1 John 1:9. Now you must make the most of your present situation and be the best possible partner.

Psalm 127:1 **UNLESS THE LORD BUILDS THE HOUSE, THEY LABOR IN VAIN WHO BUILD IT; unless the LORD guards the city, the watchman stays awake in vain.**

Here is the central core of the secret of a happy home. Let the Lord build the house. He must be the center of the home. When we put Him first everything else will fall into place. We should submit ourselves to Him first, then to one another. The Christian home can indeed be a foretaste of the wonderful home God is preparing for us in His everlasting kingdom. Dear friend, will you determine to be a good husband, or a good wife or a good future prospect for marriage? If you do your part you will find happiness and contentment now and an assurance of something even better beyond.

Review Sheet – Love and Marriage

ASSIGNMENT: Read the Bible study carefully before answering the following questions.

1. Was marriage God's original plan? Explain. Genesis 2:18, 22-24
Answer: _____

2. Explain the meaning of TRUE LOVE.
Answer: _____

3. Do you consider physical attraction as the most important requirement in choosing a life partner? Give a reason for your answer.
Answer: _____

4. Should persons who have opposing religious views marry? Explain. 2 Corinthians 6:14; Genesis 27:46; 28:1
Answer: _____

5. What type of person should a Christian seek to marry? Amos 3:3. Explain your answer.
Answer: _____

6. How long is marriage meant to last? What is the only Biblical reason for divorce?
Matthew 19:3-9
Answer: _____

7. What attitude will create a happy atmosphere between married couples? Philippians 2:3
Let each _____.

8. What other principle makes a happy marriage? Romans 12:10
In honour _____.

9. What are wives and husbands admonished to do to their partners? Ephesians 5:22-25, 28, 33
Wives, _____ --- Husbands _____

10. (a) If a married couple have differences, what does the Bible admonish? Ephesians 4:26
(b) What does this mean?
(a) Do not let _____
(b) Answer: _____

11. What is one vital factor in marriage? Explain the contrast in a marriage where love is expressed compared with one where it is not expressed.
Answer: _____

12. If God is not the centre of the home, can true happiness be expected? Psalm 127:1
Unless the LORD builds _____,
_____.

Can you see that God's way in marriage is the best way?

YES _____ NO _____