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FOUNDATIONS FOR MARRIAGE FOR MEMBERS
OF OASIS OF PEACE GLOBAL CHURCH
MANITOBA, CANADA

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FOUNDATIONS FOR MARRIAGE FOR MEMBERS
OF OASIS OF PEACE GLOBAL CHURCH
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I dedicate this dissertation to Femi Steve Omoniyi, who taught me how to love and to stay happily married; and to Lagos State Baptist Student Fellowship, where I learned some foundations for a loving, lasting marriage.

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PREFACE

My husband and children are the incredible heroes behind this project. They gave their best, their time, and their all. I am eternally grateful to them. The staff and professors of SBTS and especially my supervisor, Dr Jay Dee Owens, have also been of incredible support to me, and I value them greatly. Thank you to members of Oasis of Peace Global Church, Manitoba, Canada, for allowing the research. May God use this project to flourish marriages for His glory (Amen).

Temitope Omoniyi

Louisville, Kentucky

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Marriage is a wonderful gift from God, which should give believers joy and not sorrow, beauty and not pain. However, many married couples today are either not happy in their marriages or working on a divorce. Marriage can be loving and lasting with the right foundations, skills, commitment, and desires. For a marriage to be loving, lasting, and peaceful, it must have its foundation in Christ. Couples need to depend on God for help and be committed to following His instructions on building a godly marriage as laid out in the Scriptures.

Context

This ministry project took place in Oasis of Peace Global Church (OPGC), Manitoba, Canada. OPGC is an interdenominational, intercultural ministry with branches in North America and Africa. OPGC ministries comprise middle-aged men and women whose goal is to live for God and be His ambassadors in bringing more souls to the kingdom. About forty members of OPGC have been married for between one and twenty years; fifty are not married but are within marriageable age. One of the aims of the ministry is to help believers attain marital success. This project is relevant to members of OPGC because, without the understanding and application of God's principles for marriage, couples will find it difficult to be happy in their marriages. A good marriage needs refueling to keep being healthy. Marriages with issues need more education and help to solve the problems and transform into a loving union. Couples in OPGC need this project to enrich their marriages regardless of their current marital situation.

This project is also relevant for single members of OPGC. Singlehood is the

time when the necessary preparations for a marriage are made. It is when some foundational steps and significant decisions that will determine the future marital relationship are taken. Singles need to learn the fundamentals of marriage according to God's plan. They need to get adequate training and make the proper preparation for a loving, lasting marriage.

OPGC members are like most typical couples who either did not understand God's road map for marriage or are not willing to follow it. Some of them have troubled marriages, and this is obvious in some community discussions they have. A lack of education and adequate marriage preparation are among the causes of the trouble in most marriages. Marriage enrichment programs and follow up can help heal and grow these marriages.

A marriage enrichment program can significantly improve marriage relationships. Couples learn the basis of marriage and how to manage issues such as the roles of husband and wife. When couples apply what is learned in a marriage enrichment program, it increases both partners' commitment to the marriage, reduces the probability of divorce, and improves marital satisfaction. A marriage enrichment program also helps prevent marital distress.

Rationale

Every couple has an opportunity to live their love life, fulfilling God's desire for marriage. Unfortunately, research has shown that not many couples enjoy their marriage, and many marital unions end in separation or divorce. In the book *When Sinners Say I Do*, Dave Harvey argues that “what we believe about God determines the quality of our marriage.”¹ This assertion is true, yet several professing Christians who want to live their lives to glorify God fall short in their married lives. As Daniel L. Akin

¹ Dave Harvey, *When Sinners Say I Do* (Wapwallopen, PA: Shepherd Press, 2007), 20.

writes, "Marriage and family are good gifts from a great God. Unfortunately, in our day, the 'master's manual' is often neglected and even rejected. Ignorance, apathy, and antagonism abound in our culture when it comes to God's blueprint for the sacred institution of home."² Believers need to be educated on the road map God has provided for marriage and follow it.

The good news is that God did not just create marriage and leave human beings to figure it out by themselves. He has the road map to a flourishing and happy married life. Dave Harvey said, "God created the marriage program, wrote the operating manual, and is faithful to explain it. He is the only reliable and trustworthy authority on the subject of marriage. . . . He knows how it works and how to make it last."³ Couples that follow His manual have a godly, loving, and lasting marriage.

The foundations for a loving and lasting marriage can be learned and applied. It takes understanding, discipline, determination, and the help of the Holy Spirit to apply God's road map to one's marriage. The first step is to understand God's plan for marriage. This project will detail God's desire for marriage and the critical elements needed for a loving, lasting marriage.

Purpose

The purpose of this project was to help believers at OPGC lay the right foundations for their marriages.

Goals

These goals outline actions that can be taken to help couples understand and apply biblical principles to their marriage.

² Daniel L. Akin, preface to *God, Marriage, and Family: Rebuilding the Biblical Foundation*, by Andreas Köstenberger (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2009), 11.

³ Harvey, *When Sinners Say I Do*, 23.

1. The first goal was to assess the married lives of fifteen members of OPGC, Manitoba, Canada.
2. The second goal was to develop a six-lessons manual for counseling couples in troubled marriages and singles in their preparation for marriage.
3. The third goal was to increase knowledge on biblical marriage by teaching the developed manual to OPGC couples in a marriage enrichment conference.

Definitive research methodology was measured when these three goals were accomplished. The following section will detail the research methodology, including the means of measurement, the success criteria, and the instrumentation used.

Research Methodology

The first goal of this project was to assess the married lives of fifteen members of OPGC. This goal was measured by administering a marriage survey questionnaire to fifteen to thirty married adults to understand their views about a loving and lasting marriage.⁴ This questionnaire assessed their expectations before marriage and after the wedding celebration.⁵ It also assessed their preparations for marriage and the status of their marriages. This goal will be considered successfully met when fifteen adults complete the marriage survey yielding a clear picture of their marital status.

The second goal was to develop a manual for counseling couples in troubled marriages and singles in their preparation for marriage. The expert panel measured this goal, who utilized a rubric to evaluate the curriculum's biblical faithfulness, teaching, methodology, scope, and applicability. This goal will be considered successfully met when a minimum of 85 percent of the evaluation criterion meet or exceed the sufficient level. If the 85 percent benchmark is not initially met, the material will be revised to meet the standard.

⁴ See appendix 1.

⁵ All of the research instruments used in this project will be performed in compliance with and approved by the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Research Ethics Committee prior to use in the ministry project.

The third goal will be to increase knowledge of biblical marriage by teaching the six-lessons manual to OPGC couples and “about to wed” singles. This goal will be measured by administering a pre- and post-survey used to measure the change in knowledge. This goal will be considered successfully met when the t-test for dependent samples demonstrates a positive, statistically significant difference in the pre- and post-survey scores.

Definitions and Limitations/Delimitations

The following definitions of key terms will be used in the ministry project:

Marriage. Marriage is a covenant relationship between a man and a woman who has decided to spend the rest of their lives in love and oneness. Genesis 2:24 defines marriage as a man leaving his father and mother, uniting with his wife, and the two becoming one flesh.

Loving marriage. A loving marriage is one built on Christ-centered love. It is selfless love; it holds together despite any situation or season of life. It is quick to forgive and let go; it is willing and ready to serve and to be served.

Three limitations will apply to this project. First, the accuracy of the surveys will depend on the respondents' willingness to be honest about their marriages. To mitigate this limitation, the respondents' responses will be anonymous. Second, the effectiveness of the training will be limited by participants' willingness to make the necessary adjustments in their marriages and by the consistency of their attendance. If the participants do not attend all the sessions, it will be difficult to measure how beneficial the training has been. To mitigate this limitation, each lesson will be recorded and available to participants who miss any session. Finally, this project will be limited to short-term results; the result of a loving marriage is long-term.

One delimitation will be placed on the project. The project will be confined to a twenty-seven-week timeframe. This will give adequate time to prepare and teach the

lessons and conduct the post-survey after sessions are completed.

Conclusion

The foundation for marriage is God, and in Him alone, can couples find the way to a loving and lasting married life. Leslie Vernick writes, "God uses the marital relationship as a picture of Christ and his bride the church. Christ gives himself to meet our real and true needs, not just our felt needs."⁶ Couples are to emulate the example of Christ and the church, "follow God's example, therefore, as dearly loved children and walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God." (Eph 5:1-2). Marriage will thrive and last only when couples follow God's road map for it. God has revealed Himself and His will in the Scriptures; He has revealed His plan for marriage. Following Him will produce the beauty that he created; following Him will help couples lovingly commit to one another and enjoy bliss and happiness that will last for a lifetime.

⁶ Leslie Vernick, *How to Act Right When Your Spouse Acts Wrong* (Colorado Springs, CO: WaterBrook Press, 2001), 15.

CHAPTER 2
THE BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL BASIS FOR
MARRIAGE

God instituted marriage as a beautiful, loving, and lasting covenant relationship between a man and a woman, and He sets the principles for success.

Exegesis of Genesis 2:24-25

An exegesis of Genesis 2:24-25 supports this thesis by showing that God instituted marriage and sets the foundations and principles for a loving and lasting marriage.

Creation Blessings

The Scripture clarifies that God created the heavens, the earth, and everything inside it (Gen 1-2). The creation account "reveals that God is a redeeming God. It records how He brought the cosmos out of chaos, turned darkness into light, made divisions between them, transformed cursing into a blessing, and moved from what was evil and darkness to what was holy."¹ The world was initially formless and lifeless until God decided to bring life and beautiful things out of nothing. God created all the plants, animals, and every living thing on the earth. Several non-living things (water, sun, moon, wind, etc.) also came into existence by His creative power. God made a beautiful and functioning world, and He created a man to "fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the

¹ Allen P. Ross, "Genesis," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary Law*, ed. John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck (Colorado Springs, CO: David C Cook, 2018), 25.

ground” (Gen 1:28).²

Man is God’s representative on earth. He is to take care of all that God created. Genesis 2 clarified that there was a problem with man’s responsibilities and the ability to deliver on expectation:

Now the Lord God had formed out of the ground all the wild animals and all the birds in the sky. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. So, the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds in the sky, and all the wild animals, but for Adam, no suitable helper was found.³

The man was lonely and helpless in the assignments God gave Him. God noticed the loneliness and the capability gap, which led to one of the most remarkable creation blessings: the creation of a woman. God created the woman very differently from all other creations. All creation came to being from nothing except the word of God (*creation ex-nihilo*). God made man from the dust of the ground “then the Lord God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being,” but the woman was made from man.⁴ “So, the Lord God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep, and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man’s ribs and then closed up the place with flesh. Then the Lord God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man.”⁵ God made a precious being. Adam saw this amazing creature, his new companion and helpmate, and called her woman.

One of the creation blessings is the law. The law helps humans follow God; it allows humans to understand God’s expectations for His creation. It gives a clear message and picture of exactly how God will want humans to live and bring Him glory.

² Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are from the New International Version.

³ Gen 2:19-20.

⁴ Gen 2:7.

⁵ Gen 2:21-22.

The first command from God to the man in Genesis 2:15-17 was, “The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. And the Lord God commanded the man, ‘You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it, you will certainly die.’”⁶ Allen P. Ross, in the book *The Bible Knowledge Commentary Law*, argues that:

Everything that exists must be under God’s control. The creation must be in subjection to the Creator. Forces of nature, enemies, creatures, and objects that became pagan deities—none of these would pose a threat to the servants of the living God. If indeed God was before all things and made all things, how foolish it would be to have any other gods before Him! There were none. If indeed, God made man in His image to represent Him, how foolish it would be, to make an image of God! If indeed God set aside one day for rest from His work, should not man who is walking with God follow Him? The commandments find their rationale here.⁷

The laws of God are not cumbersome; rather, following them gives life.

Choosing to defile God’s law brings punishment and death (Gen 3). God made everything man needed to achieve his God-given assignment, woman included. All of God’s creation is a blessing regardless of its nature and structure. Parts of creation could be male or female, plant or animal, aquatic or terrestrial, and all have a role in the circle of life. Humans have sufficient provisions to make them obey God and follow Him completely.

Creation Missing Link

God created a beautiful world with beautiful creations. However, amid this beauty, the man seemed lonely and helpless. “But for Adam, no suitable helper was found.”⁸ Adam named all the animals, and they must have provided some companionship for him. Still, before God, that was not enough. Victor P. Hamilton argued that “the

⁶ Gen 2:15-17.

⁷ Ross, “Genesis,” 25.

⁸ Gen 2:20b.

animals are creatures, but they are not helpers. Adam must look elsewhere for his complement.”⁹ God saw that Adam was missing a critical companion and helper, and He quickly came to his rescue. God wanted Adam to enjoy the needed companionship and be effective in the work He gave him to do; God decided to meet his need by creating someone that would be an effective companion and the needed help for his God-given assignment.

Working with clay, God is the potter. Working with body tissue, God is the builder. Eve thus becomes the first thing that was created from another living being. Also, we need to note that it is not Eve herself but simply the raw material taken from the man. Just as the man does not emerge until a divine creative act on the dust takes place, so a woman does not emerge until a divine creative act is performed on the man’s side.¹⁰

God worked with the clay He already made into a man to create another human being—a woman who would help the man as needed. The emergence of the woman is a creative and divine act of God. God created women for a purpose, and He even wrote out her job description. The job of the woman was to be the man’s helper: “The Lord God said, ‘It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.’”¹¹ God has given the man a job to do, and the woman is to help him do the job.

God created the heavens and the earth and everything inside it. However, “the climax of the creation is, interestingly, the notation that the couple were naked and felt no shame before each other. Of course, naked refers primarily to physical nudity, but one may also think that no barrier of any kind drove a wedge between Adam and Eve.”¹² The man became complete with the woman. He is no longer alone; he has someone like him, someone to commune with, share his life stories with, collaborate with, in the divine

⁹ Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis 1-17* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1990), 176.

¹⁰ Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis 1-17*, 179.

¹¹ Gen 2:18.

¹² Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis 1-17*, 181.

service. Adam and Eve felt no shame before each other because God made them so. There was no need for secrecy; they were a team; together, they would accomplish God's plan for the world. God had a great plan for the union of man and woman.

God Instituted Marriage

The creation of a woman as the helper of a man brought about the institution of marriage. God saw the need for help, a companion for man, and He created a woman. "So the Lord God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep, and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and then closed up the place with flesh. Then the Lord God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man."¹³ God met the need in Adam's life. God created someone like Adam and brought Eve to him so that together they could bring God glory and fulfill His mission on earth.

Adam saw his wife, knew that she was from him and accepted her as his helper; marriage was instituted. "The man said, 'This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman,' for she was taken out of man.' That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh. Adam and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame."¹⁴ One flesh is the biblical view of marriage. It gives no room for selfish ambitions but follows the words in Philippians 2:3-4, "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility, value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others." Marriage is about two people sharing everything, which is not limited to physical touch, emotions, money, hopes, aspirations, and faith. It means no barriers, no separation of any kind, but total openness until death parts them.

During the creation, God instituted marriage and provided the guideline for its

¹³ Gen 2:21-22.

¹⁴ Gen 2:23-25.

success. Marriage is a blessing from God, and the creation of a woman was the missing link to a fulfilled man. God is the founder and initiator of the marital relationship; He started the marriage institution for His glory and humanity's good. Marriage succeeds on His terms. The event of creating a woman is one piece of guidance for how marriage is expected to work. Genesis 2:24-25 highlights God's plan for marriage, which includes forsaking, clinging, and cleaving. His goal is for forsaking, clinging, and cleaving—all within the walls of the relationship between a man and a woman.

Perhaps the most crucial element in this verse is the verbs it uses: *forsakes* and *clings*. The verb forsake frequently describes Israel's rejection of her covenant relationship with Yahweh (Jer. 1:16; 2:13, 17, 19; 5:7; 16:11; 17:13; 19:4; 22:9; many other examples from the OT could be cited). By contrast, the verb cling often designates the maintenance of the covenant relationship (Deut. 4:4; 10:20; 11:22; 13:5 . . . 30:22). Thus to leave father and mother and cling to one's wife means to sever one loyalty and commence another. Already Scripture has sounded the note that marriage is a covenant rather than an ad-hoc, makeshift arrangement.¹⁵

Marriage is about leaving everyone else and beginning a life of commitment to one's spouse. It is about two people agreeing to live together and plan their life together as one body. They are no longer two but one in spirit, in purpose, and love.

Marriage is a lifelong commitment; the husband and the wife leave all others, cling, and cleave to each other for as long as they both shall live. The good news is that the relationship between a man and his wife is not like a boss and a subordinate. Though God made a woman from the rib of the man, yet "she was not made out of his head to surpass him, nor from his feet to be trampled on, but from his side to be equal to him, and near his heart to be dear to him."¹⁶ The woman was made as a helper for the man, and she is equal to him.

God gave the basic guidelines for marriage as an institution. He was intentional about the relationship. He designed marriage to be a relationship of oneness and

¹⁵ Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis 1-17*, 181.

¹⁶ Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset, David Brown, *A Commentary, Critical and Explanatory, on the Old and New Testaments*, vol. 1 (Michigan: S.S. Scranton & Company, 1871), 19.

commitment. This design is evident in how the woman was created: “This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called ‘woman,’ for she was taken out of man. That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh. Adam and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.”¹⁷ As Ross stated, “God intended husband and wife to be a spiritual, functional unity, walking in integrity, serving God, and keeping His commandments together. When this harmony is operative, society prospers under God’s hand.”¹⁸

God’s plan for marriage is beautiful; it is complementing each other; it is helping each other achieve God’s purpose on earth.

Now in a covenantal joining with his wife, the man and his spouse become one flesh. Nothing is said yet about any procreating roles that this couple shall assume. The man does not leave one family to start another family. What is being pinpointed is solidarity. A man by himself is not one flesh. A woman by herself is not one flesh. The climax of the creation is, interestingly, the notation that the couple were naked and felt no shame before each other.¹⁹

Marriage is a “no shame” relationship. The man is to leave his family and be united with his wife. There is no shame in Christian love and marriage. Nakedness also signifies openness to each other; the couple is no longer two but one. They are now one flesh and should remain so to enjoy the bliss that God intended for marriage.

Exegesis of Ephesians 5:21-33

The exegesis of Ephesians 5:21-33 supports this thesis by carefully differentiating men’s and women’s roles in marriage.

The theology of marriage is rooted in the relationship between Christ and the church. Marriage is a mirror of the relationship between Christ and the church. Ephesians 5:21-33 highlights the essential principles of Christian marriage. The passage exposes the

¹⁷ Gen 2:23-25.

¹⁸ Ross, “Genesis,” 29.

¹⁹ Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis 1-17*, 182.

relationship between the church and Christ and gives the principles for a Christian marriage. “Christian marriages flourish when husbands and wives are filled by the Spirit and reflect the picture of Christ’s relationship to the church.”²⁰ Geoffrey Bromiley argues that “as God made man in His own image, so He made earthly marriage in the image of His own eternal marriage with His people.”²¹ Christ’s role was to reconcile man back to God. The church’s role is different; the church is to witness and lead other people to Christ for redemption. Similarly, men and women have different roles in marriage. However, these diverse roles are to complement each other toward glorifying God.

Roles in Marriage

When God made Adam, He had a plan and work for Adam. God’s plan for man was a creature who carries the same image and likeness of God who will rule over all of God’s other creatures. Adam had a role to play on God’s earth. He is the manager, the overseer, the chief executive officer of God’s organization, “Kingdom Earth.” God’s role for Adam was clear and unique: “The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.”²² However, God noticed that Adam needed help for the work, and Eve came into the picture. With two people, the role expanded and was also simplified. The two humans had diverse and complementary roles, including taking care of the world and taking care of themselves.

Man’s specific marital roles. God has given man the role of leadership. “The husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior” (Eph 5:23). The husband is responsible for the family. He is to lead his wife and family to the Lord and in living godly lives. Leadership is essential in every

²⁰ Tony Merida et al., *Exalting Jesus in Ephesians* (Nashville: Holman Reference, 2014), 130.

²¹ Geoffrey Bromiley, *God and Marriage* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 43.

²² Gen 2:15.

facet of life; the husband's role as the head of the home is vital in determining the family's course.

God's plan for man does not end in just the leadership; men must love their wives as Christ loved the church and as their bodies:

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. After all, no one ever hated their own body, but they feed and care for their body, just as Christ does the church.²³

The Bible is clear in this passage that God's plan for the relationship between husband and wife is for the man to love his wife just like Christ loves the church. Christ loved the church; He still loves the church. He gave up His life to save the church. This is the most outstanding example of love, and it is God's expectation of the kind of love a man should have for his wife. Joel R. Beeke, in his book, *How Should Men Lead Their Families*, argues that men are to:

Sacrifice for her. Provide for her and cherish her just as you love your own body. Give her your thoughts, your time, your talk, your tenderness, and your touch – but make sure you touch her heart before you touch her body. Stop measuring your love on small spoonfuls according to what she has done for you lately. Start pouring your love by the bucket according to the infinite riches of Christ's love for you. . . . The most important gift you can give your wife is not your money, a house, a car, jewelry, or even yourself. The best gift you can give her is to bring her to God so that she can glorify him and enjoy him forever. So speak the word of God to her. Pray for her soul.²⁴

Men are to love their wives without any condition. They are to be wholly sold out to caring for their wives regardless of the circumstances. Christ died for the church while we yet sinned. Christ forgave the church, still reaches out to people, and prays for us despite our unfaithfulness to Him. Men are to be there for their wives and be

²³ Eph 5:25-29.

²⁴ Joel R. Beeke, *How Should Men Lead Their Families* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2014), 16.

committed to them. This is difficult for a natural man, but the Scripture has a plan in Ephesians 5:25-33 on how husbands can have a good relationship with their wives: be Spirit-filled husbands. The Holy Spirit is the believer's helper. He shows us the way to please God. Ephesians 5 shows how men who are Spirit-controlled can and should love their wives. "The love of husbands for their wives is to be modelled on the love of Christ for his church."²⁵ This is:

1. Sacrificial Love (5:25)
2. Sanctifying Love (5:26-27)
3. Satisfying Love (5:28-31)²⁶

Christ has set the example of the greatest kind of love (John 15:13). By His grace, a man can love his wife sacrificially, satisfying and sanctifying her. It means not seeking one's satisfaction but instead being eager to understand and meet the needs of one's spouse. It is a continual willingness to put one's interest and pleasure second to benefit one's spouse. It means going above and beyond to meet the needs and interests of one's spouse. Jesus loved the church sacrificially, and He demands the same love for the husband-and-wife relationship.

Woman's specific marital roles. The Scripture tells how wives are to relate with their husbands. It says in Ephesians 5:22-24, "wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do 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."

Frank Thielman argues that wives are to submit to their husbands:

"As to the Lord" (ὡς τῷ κυρίῳ, hōs tō kyriō). This phrase is ambiguous. A few earlier interpreters thought that the term κύριος here meant "master" and that Paul

²⁵ Francis Foulkes, *Ephesians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1963), 165.

²⁶ Tony Merida et al., *Exalting Jesus in Ephesians*, 130.

was telling wives to view their husbands as their masters. That would have required the plural rather than the singular, however, and is not consistent with 6:5, 7, where Paul tells slaves to render obedience to their masters “as to Christ” and “as for the Lord and not for human beings.”²⁷

Wives are not slaves to their husbands, but they respect their leadership and authority as the church honors, obey, and respect Christ. This is difficult for the natural woman, but by the infilling and power of the Holy Spirit, women can bring God glory by honoring and respecting their husbands.

It needs no argument that the church is subject to Christ; even so then, he says, let wives also be subject to their husbands. The final addition in everything might seem more than can be accepted as God’s purpose by this present generation with its stress on the emancipation of womanhood and the place of a woman outside the home in every sphere of life that man occupies. Has not a woman equal rights with a man to self-determination? May not a married woman make herself a career just as much as her husband? The answer that the New Testament would give is that she may do so, provided that it does not mean the Sacrifice of the divine pattern for home life, for family relationships, and for the whole Christian community. She may fulfil any function and any responsibility in society. Still, if she has accepted before God the responsibility of marriage and of a family, these must be her first concern, and this is expressed here in terms of her relationship to her husband as head of the home. ‘As the Church wholeheartedly devotes herself to Christ, so the wife wholeheartedly accepts her place in the family’ and devotes herself without reserve to fulfil her function as wife and mother.²⁸

Overall, God has given men and women-specific roles in the world and in marriage. However, the task cannot be fully achieved by a natural human but by the Holy Spirit.

We need the Spirit. Put this in the context of marriage. The Holy Spirit makes a person loving, forgiving, peaceful, self-controlled, gentle, and servant-hearted toward his spouse. We need His help to live like this in all relationships, including marriage. When you get married, you learn how selfish you are! Do you think the type of Sacrifice described in verses 22 and 25 is possible apart from the Spirit’s help? No. Everything in us wants to fight against these exhortations. And what about conflict? Do you need the Spirit’s work to reconcile? Yes. One sinner is bad enough, but now two have become one! Marriage is difficult because both fall short of the glory of God. We need the Spirit for unity, harmony, and peace in marriage.²⁹

²⁷ Frank Thielman, *Ephesians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Ada, MI: Baker Academic, 2010), 122.

²⁸ Foulkes, *Ephesians*, 161-62.

²⁹ Tony Merida et al., *Exalting Jesus in Ephesians*, 133-34.

The Holy Spirit is the believer's helper (John 14:16; 15:26-27). He helps with spiritual activities, but He is an overall helper in all life issues, including marriage. As many as will come to Christ and release themselves to Him will secure His help and the help of the Holy Spirit.

Exegesis of 1 Peter 3:1-7

Exegesis of 1 Peter 3:1-7 supports this thesis by defining the level of authority in marriage.

In every relationship and organization, there is a hierarchy of authority. This hierarchy helps to ensure roles are defined, and conflict is reduced. The Scripture is clear on authority in the family. The husband is the head of the home. The marital authority belongs to the husband. God has made man the head of the family. In 1 Peter 3:7, the apostle Peter admonished husbands to treat their wives as equals. This means their leadership style should not be autocratic.

Husbands also have the duty of living with their wives according to knowledge ("understanding," Berk.) as equals. Their obligations are equal, for they are heirs together of the grace of life. As the physically weaker vessel, the wife is entitled to reverent regard and respectful treatment from him to whom she is subordinate. Domestic disharmony growing out of dis-agreements and ill feelings is to be avoided that their prayers be not hindered. Holiness produces the right attitudes and proper actions between husbands and wives (cf. 1 Thess. 4:3-7).³⁰

Husbands are to see their wives as co-laborers in the vineyard of God and co-laborers in the home. Both men and women are created equally in the image of God and are responsible to God. Husbands are to treat their wives with respect and love. The Christian husband is to love his wife unconditionally and sacrificially, just like Christ loved the church. Christlike love is more than a feeling; it is a commitment to the other person. The husband is the head of the family, but this authority is for service. Husbands

³⁰ Richard S. Taylor, *Hebrews through Revelation*, Beacon Bible Commentary, vol. X (Kansas City, MO: Nazarene Publishing House, 1967), 287.

are to love their wives just as they love themselves. The spouses should be each other's best friend's; a Christian husband should listen to his wife, care for her, and work hard to provide for her needs.

On the other hand, "Christian wives are to be obedient and loyal to their husbands, even though their husbands should obey not the word, i.e., are not Christians."³¹ The aim is that the Christian wife may win her husband to Christ through her submission. It is important to note that submission is not just a requirement for wives whose husbands do not obey the Lord; it is required for all Christian wives.

The subordination of the wife to the husband was ordained by God (cf. Gen. 2:7, 21-22), and it is to be maintained in love by the woman as a helpmeet for man. On the other hand, the superiority of the husband is to be maintained in tenderness. In her, subordination Eve was not restive, and in his superiority, Adam was not exacting. . . Christianity restores the husband and the wife to the right relation. Authority, kindly exercised, and subordination, quietly acknowledged, promote the development of the affections.³²

A Christian woman is to submit to her husband. However, submission can be challenging. Submission does not mean superficially following orders, but a willingness to help and please her husband without being asked. Submission's limit is when a woman is asked to sin. A Christian woman should oppose her husband's wishes when sin is involved, but she should do so respectfully and kindly. A godly wife is responsible for correcting her husband's sin in love (Gal 6:1).

God has a plan, and His plan is the best. Every home needs a leader, and where there is a leader, there are one or more followers. The wife is to be submissive to her husband. Peter used the example of biblical women to teach Christian women to submit to their husbands: "For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to adorn themselves. They submitted themselves to their husbands, like Sarah, who obeyed Abraham and called him her Lord. You are her daughters if you do what is

³¹ Taylor, *Hebrews through Revelation*, 285.

³² Taylor, *Hebrews through Revelation*, 286.

right and do not give way to fear.”³³ Sarah was submissive and obedient to her husband. God’s expectation is the same for today’s women. The good news is that in 1 Peter 3:1-3, apostle Peter argues that “divine grace is sufficient for social relationships” so that both partners can effectively fulfill their roles for the glory of God.³⁴

Exegesis of Malachi 2:14

An exegesis of Malachi 2:14 supports this thesis by affirming marriage as a covenant relationship.

God instituted marriage as an opportunity for companionship, happiness, and bliss for humanity (Gen 2:23). Allen Ross argued that “marriage was designed as a social blessing to continue the race, to develop people spiritually and emotionally and intellectually, to soothe and sustain them amidst the depressing and difficult circumstances of life, and to enable people to function as the image of God, especially now in a sinful world (Gen. 1:27–28).”³⁵

Sadly, humanity has jeopardized God’s plan and intention, and there is pain and sorrow in marriages today. God’s original purpose for marriage has been thwarted. Instead of fulfilling God’s plan of good companionship, producing godly offspring, “the human race embraced every form of profane and vile activity; and so formally or informally, marriages were ruined and dissolved because of sin (Matt. 19:8).”³⁶ Malachi’s message was to address the issues in marriage and to present the mind of God.

³³ 1 Pet 3:5-6. Sarah, Abraham’s wife, called him Lord and obeyed him. This shows a great level of submission to her husband.

³⁴ Taylor, *Hebrews through Revelation*, 285.

³⁵ Allen P. Ross, *Malachi Then and Now: An Expository Commentary Based on Detailed Exegetical Analysis* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2018), 73.

³⁶ Ross, *Malachi Then and Now*.

What is a Covenant Relationship?

“Covenant is a binding, legal agreement established between two parties. The power and purpose of the covenant relationship is to enable us to walk in the fullness of our salvation.”³⁷ A covenant relationship is a binding relationship between two or more people. It is a legal agreement. All parties have roles to play, and the roles are mandatory. Defaulting in one’s agreement is defaulting on legal terms that have consequences. A covenant is different from a promise; a promise is an oath or a vow to do something and does not require a legal commitment; however, a covenant is legal. The Lexham Bible Dictionary defines Covenant as:

COVENANT (תִּרְוָה, berith; διαθήκη, diathēkē). A sacred kinship bond between two parties, ratified by swearing an oath. Covenant making was a widespread custom throughout the ancient Near East and Graeco-Roman culture, serving as a means to forge sociopolitical bonds between individuals or groups. God’s covenants are prominent in every period of salvation history. Divine covenants reveal God’s saving plan for establishing communion with Israel and the nations, ultimately fulfilled by the death and resurrection of Christ.³⁸

God has revealed Himself as a covenant-making God. This is evident in the many covenants He made with man. The Scriptures recorded four main covenants between God and man: the Abrahamic Covenant (Gen 12:1-3), the Mosaic (Sinai) Covenant (Exod 19:24), the Davidic Covenant (2 Sam 7:8-16), and the New Covenant through Christ (Jer 31:31-34).

The Abrahamic Covenant (Gen 12:1-3)

In the land of Haran, “Abram hears the divine commission to leave his family and go where the Lord shows him.”³⁹ God called him out of idolatry, out of a pagan

³⁷ “Covenant Relationship: What is Biblical Covenant Relationship?” Curt Landry Ministries, accessed May 6, 2021, <https://www.curtlandry.com/pillar-page-covenant-relationship-what-is-biblical-covenant-relationship/>.

³⁸ Jan H. Nylund, “Covenant” in *The Lexham Bible Dictionary* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016), 34.

³⁹ Joan E. Cook, *Genesis*, New Collegeville Bible Commentary, vol 2. (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2011), 18.

world, and gave him a commission. The commission came with promises of blessings, which later became part of the Abrahamic Covenant.

Three promises were based on God's call for Abram to leave his land: (a) a great nation, (b) a blessing for Abram, and (c) a great name (v. 2). These promises would enable him to "be a blessing" (the second imperative, v. 2). Based on this obedience were God's three promises to: (a) bless those who blessed him, (b) curse anyone who would treat him lightly, and (c) bless the families of the earth through him (v. 3). To gift or curse, Abram was to bless or curse Abram's God.⁴⁰

Thus, the Abrahamic Covenant was an agreement between God and Abraham, which will continue with Abraham's seed. It was a commission that came with promises of blessings.

The Mosaic (Sinai) Covenant (Exod 19:24)

The Mosaic covenant is the Covenant between God and the people of Israel. God delivered Israel from Pharaoh and the Egyptians' hand and led them to Sinai, where He made a covenant with them.

The proposal made by God (My Covenant) would give Israel an exalted position among the nations in view of their acceptance of God's righteous standards. If they accepted and obeyed the covenant stipulations, God promised to make them His treasured possession (cf. Deut. 7:6; 14:2; 26:18; Ps. 135:4; Mal. 3:17). They would be His own people, highly valued by and related to Him. . . . They would be a kingdom of priests, . . . and . . . they would be a holy nation, . . . dedicated entirely to the service of God. God redeemed Israel so that she might be in touch with and separated to Him.⁴¹

God redeemed Israel and made a covenant with them to make them His people. Israel's responsibility was to accept and obey God's standards.

The Davidic Covenant (2 Sam 7:8-16)

God made eternal promises to David and his lineage:

⁴⁰ Allen P. Ross, "Genesis," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck (Colorado Springs, CO: David C Cook, 1985), 47.

⁴¹ John D. Hannah, "Exodus," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck (Colorado Springs, CO: David C Cook, 1985), 138.

The Lord declares to you that the Lord himself will establish a house for you: When your days are over, and you rest with your ancestors, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, your own flesh and blood, and I will establish his kingdom. He is the one who will build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be his father, and he will be my son. When he does wrong, I will punish him with a rod wielded by men, with floggings inflicted by human hands. But my love will never be taken away from him, as I took it away from Saul, whom I removed from before you. Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever.⁴²

God gave David and his lineage a command. The command comes with a blessing. David and his children were to obey his commands.

The New Covenant through Christ (Jer 31:31-34)

The children of Israel did not stay committed to the previous covenants. They disobeyed God severely, but God did not give up on them; instead, He made a new covenant with Israel and Judah. The New Covenant,

Will involve an internalization of His Law. He will put His Law in their minds and on their hearts, not just on stones. God's New Covenant will give Israel the inner ability to obey His righteous standards and thus to enjoy His blessings. A second aspect of the New Covenant will be God's provision for sin. The sins of the people resulted in the curses of the Old Covenant. However, as part of the New Covenant, God will forgive Israel's wickedness and remember their sins no more. But how could a holy God overlook sin? The answer is that God did not "overlook" sin-its penalty was paid for by a Substitute.⁴³

God made a new covenant that impacts Israel, Judah, and anyone who will accept His substitute for the remission of sin. God gave a command, which comes with a blessing. Man's role is to obey His commands.

God's covenant with man clarifies his definition of a covenant. From the Abrahamic and Mosaic Covenants, we see some similarities that guide what covenant means to God. From these examples, one can argue that biblical covenant involves:

1. Two or more parties. In the examples examined, the covenants were between God

⁴² 2 Sam 7:11b-16.

⁴³ John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary Major Prophets* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C Cook, 2018), 168.

and His people.

2. There is a binding agreement on the roles of both parties. The binding agreement in the examples involves man's obedience to God's command/commission. The commission comes with a blessing. Man's role is to obey God, and God will fulfill His promise of blessings.

God instituted marriage as a covenant relationship between a man and a woman, with God as a witness of the covenant.

What Makes Marriage a Covenant Relationship?

Based on the examples shared above, marriage qualifies as a covenant relationship. Some of the reasons for this argument are as follows.

God, the founder, set it up as a covenant relationship. The founder of marriage set it up as a covenant relationship. God is the initiator of marriage, and He set marriage up as a covenant relationship. Oscar Reed, in the Beacon Bible Commentary, argued, "the phrase wife of thy Covenant and the reference to God's being a witness to the Covenant, point to a high view of marriage as a sacred compact made in the presence of Jehovah God."⁴⁴ God is the initiator, and a witness to the covenant agreed upon between a man and his wife. Reed also argued, "whether or not Old Testament marriages were formalized in a troth before the priest, there are other references which point up the truth that marriage is a covenant relationship to which the Lord witnesses (cf. Gen. 31:50; Prov. 2:16-17)."⁴⁵

The biblical marriage involves an agreement between a man and a woman, which is the vow they both share. "A covenantal view of marriage would show that you

⁴⁴ Oscar F. Reed, *Hosea through Malachi*, Beacon Bible Commentary, vol. V (Kansas City, MO: Nazarene Publishing House, 1966), 425.

⁴⁵ Reed, *Hosea through Malachi*, 427.

are not partners keeping score on your contract agreements, but you are one flesh, committed to love and serve each other not because of what you can get out of it, but because you simply belong to each other.”⁴⁶

Marriage involves oaths or vows. Allen Ross argues that “the expression (‘the Lord has witnessed’ — and still does witness or . . . ‘the Lord remains a witness’) will be part of the point that marriage was a covenant because they took an oath, God witnessed it, and in doing so, he gave his approval to the marriage.”⁴⁷ Marriage involves oath-taking before God and men. There is a vow and commitment to the other person. The vow details roles and responsibilities and a promise to love and take care of the other person.

Marriage involves legal agreements. In many countries of the world, marriage consists of a deal of some kind. Some countries have legal documents signed by the couples and witnesses as a binding document to the marriage’s legality. In some countries where traditions do not warrant the signing of documents, some agreements and legality still exists, making the union a covenant relationship.

Conclusion

Marriage is a covenant that should not be broken (Gen 2:24). A man is to become one with his wife and not separate (Mark 10:9; Matt 19:6). Douglas Rawlinson Jones observes: “Malachi plainly regarded a marriage witnessed by Yahweh, no doubt in a formal troth before the priest, as a covenant not to be broken. Man and wife are ‘those whom the Lord hath joined together.’”⁴⁸ The marriage covenant is a lifetime covenant.

⁴⁶ Russell D. Moore, *The Storm-Tossed Family: How the Cross Reshapes the Home* (Nashville: B&H, 2018), 112.

⁴⁷ Ross, *Malachi Then and Now*, 76.

⁴⁸ John Marsh and Alan Richardson, *Malachi*, Torch Bible Commentaries (London: SCM

God hates divorce (Mal 2:14; Matt 19:1-9).

‘She is the wife of thy Covenant, to whom thou art so firmly bound that, while she continues faithful, thou canst not be loosed from her, for it was a covenant for life. It is the wife with whom thou hast covenanted and who has covenanted with thee; there is an oath of God between you, which is not to be trifled with, is not to be played fast and loose with.’ Married people should often call to mind their marriage vows and review them with all seriousness as those that make conscience of performing what they promised.⁴⁹

God’s plan for marriage is a lifelong covenant between a man and his wife. He witnessed the oath-taking, and “He certainly would not give his approval to its dissolution, for the Covenant he witnessed would be broken. . . . ‘She is the wife of your covenant,’ or ‘your covenant wife.’ To end that marriage is to break a covenant. And therein is the treachery.”⁵⁰

Press, Ltd., 1962), 196.

⁴⁹ Matthew Henry, “Commentary on Malachi 2,” Blue Letter Bible, accessed April 2, 2020, https://www.blueletterbible.org/comm/mhc/mal/mal_002.cfm.

⁵⁰ Ross, *Malachi Then and Now*, 78.

CHAPTER 3

PRACTICAL AND HISTORICAL ISSUES WITH MARRIAGE

Marriage can be beautiful, fun, and exciting, but sometimes it is not; rather, it is full of pain, threatened, and sometimes ends in divorce.

Godly Foundation

A loving and lasting marriage is based on a godly foundation and a commitment to following the road map for marriage as revealed in the Scriptures.

God as the originator of marriage, has the blueprint for a loving and lasting marriage. It is only by following God's instruction that marriage can be what it was meant to be—fun-filled, loving, beautiful, and lasting. “In this day of disintegrating families on every side, we dare not try to make it on our own.”¹ The Bible is God's method of revealing to man how to have a beautiful and fun-filled marriage. When believers follow God's Word and obey His commands, they can achieve a loving and lasting marriage. Some critical foundations for a godly marriage are addressed below.

Fundamentals of a Christian Marriage

Some essential fundamentals of Christian marriage are discussed below.

Christ-centered marriage. God is the author of marriage; making Him the center of a family is the prerequisite for a godly, fun-filled, and lasting marriage. “A

¹ James Dobson, *Love for a Lifetime: Building a Marriage That Will Go the Distance* (Portland, OR: Multnomah Books, 1987), 45.

meaningful prayer life is essential in maintaining a Christ-centered home.”² No matter how busy a family is, prayer time is crucial. Christian husbands and wives must find time to pray together for themselves, their children, and their marriage. Couples who do not pray together are opening opportunities for sin and making themselves vulnerable.

Reading and studying the Scriptures together is vital in a Christ-centered marriage. James Dobson argued that “the couple who depends on Scripture for solutions to the stresses of living has a distinct advantage over the family with no faith.”³ Reading the Scriptures gives the couple an understanding of God’s intention for marriage and how to succeed in it. The Scripture is the ultimate resource for Christian living, in it is the mind of God for marriage and all issues of life.

Dobson also argued that “the best thing you can do for your marriage is to grow closer to Jesus. The more you understand and appreciate God’s love for you in Christ, the better your marriage will be as you reflect that love to your spouse.”⁴ The more a couple grows closer to Jesus, the more like Him they become, the more they want to obey His command, the more they desire to keep each other happy and in God's will.

Devoted love. Love is a crucial ingredient in a godly home; however, it takes commitment and hard work to keep love alive. Commitment to loving one’s spouse is needed in times of stress, trials, and storms of life. Dobson argued that “marriages that lack an iron-willed determination to hang together at all costs are like the fragile Roman bridges. They appear to be secure and may indeed remain upright . . . until they are put under heavy pressure. That is when the seams split, and the foundation crumbles.”⁵

² Dobson, *Love for a Lifetime*, 47.

³ Dobson, *Love for a Lifetime*, 51.

⁴ Dobson, *Love for a Lifetime*, 53.

⁵ Dobson, *Love for a Lifetime*, 54.

Commitment to loving one another is needed during stress, daily frustrations, and unexpected calamities that may befall the couple at any point in their married life.

Christian couples need to carefully, and with commitment, work to deepen their friendship and love. In his book *The Five Love Languages*, Gary Chapman argues that every partner in a marital relationship has a primary love language with which they understand and feel emotional love. Chapman summed all the love languages into five: words of affirmation, quality time, receiving gifts, acts of service, and physical touch. He argued that everyone might enjoy some parts of each of these languages. Still, each person usually speaks one primary language, and only seldom does a couple speak the same emotional love language. As Jim Newheiser writes, “Love infused with gospel grace does not just happen. Husbands and wives must work continually to show each other this kind of love.”⁶

Love must be kindled; it must be refueled continually. The good news is that with commitment, love can grow. Faithfully following the Lord will help to ignite and grow love among couples. “A Christian entering into marriage commits to love her spouse, not merely for what she thinks he is or hopes he will become, but for who he is and whatever he will become. This reflects the kind of eternal, unchanging love with which God has loved us.”⁷ This is Christlike love. “Husbands are to love their wives with a love that is unconditional, sacrificial, purifying, nurturing, cherishing, and understanding. This calling to love our wives as Christ has loved us can be overwhelming” but can be done when believers yield completely to God.⁸

⁶ Jim Newheiser, *Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2017), 81.

⁷ Newheiser, *Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage*, 83.

⁸ Newheiser, *Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage*, 92.

Communication. What is said and what is heard can make or mar a marital relationship. Men and women communicate differently. “Research makes it clear that little girls are blessed with greater linguistic ability than the little boys, and it remains a lifelong talent.”⁹ Women talk more than men and are highly emotional. Still, women can be attracted to strong, quiet men, leading to frustrating times for both parties when married. She wants him to talk, but he would not. There is a level of compromise that should be reached in marriage for peace and love to grow.

A man has a God-given responsibility to love his wife, but she should also understand the differences between herself and her spouse. Both parties must adjust and make time for meaningful conversations. Dobson counsels that couples “change that which can be altered, explain that which can be understood, teach that which can be learned, revise that which can be improved, resolve that which can be settled, and negotiate that which is open to compromise.”¹⁰ There is a mid-point where both parties can compromise and make their communication better.

It is best to open up the line of communication with one’s spouse to clarify any problem. Leslie Vernick argued that “you should begin to give your spouse the benefit of the doubt until you have had a chance to talk with him or her about whatever is troubling you. You may find yourself overly upset for nothing.”¹¹ Communication helps. Sometimes, the issue is just a misunderstanding; one’s spouse can easily let go of a value if told about its negative impact on the marriage. The role of communication in a marriage is significant, and couples should work hard to keep communication open.

⁹ Dobson, *Love for a Lifetime*, 57.

¹⁰ Dobson, *Love for a Lifetime*, 60.

¹¹ Leslie Vernick, *How to Act Right When Your Spouse Acts Wrong* (Colorado Springs, CO: WaterBrook Press, 2001), 41.

Submission. The Scripture is obvious on submission. “Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do 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” (Eph 5:21-24). God commands that wives submit to their husbands. It is not a matter of choice; it is God’s directive.

Submission does not mean externally following orders. In a healthy marriage, the husband will not frequently tell his wife what to do; she will gladly seek to help and please him without being asked. A godly wife’s submission will not merely be outward, but she will also have an attitude of respect towards her husband. She will love him with a generous love.¹²

Submission in marriage is mutual; it does not mean that the wife is only following orders, but that she is willingly and gladly helping and pleasing her husband without being asked. Submission’s limitation lies when one partner is asked to do something contrary to the teaching of the Scripture. Newheiser argues that “when a wife believes that she must oppose her husband’s wishes for the Lord’s sake, she should do so in a way that is respectful and kind.”¹³ A wife must always show the love of Christ to her husband, whether he is a believer or not. “Whatever the situation, a wife in a difficult marriage must learn to depend on the Lord for her joy and satisfaction, rather than expecting to find ultimate fulfilment from her husband. Such a woman can flourish, even though she has to endure a drought in her marriage because she is like a tree planted by the water (Jer 17:5-8).”¹⁴ Believers can always trust in the Holy Spirit’s power to help them in difficult situations, such as submitting to an unbelieving spouse.

¹² Newheiser, *Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage*, 97.

¹³ Newheiser, *Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage*, 99.

¹⁴ Newheiser, *Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage*.

Divorce Rate and Reasons

The rate and reasons for divorce in the twentieth century support this thesis. There are several reasons why a marriage can end in separation or divorce; some could be classified as genuine or necessary reasons, whereas some reasons can be seen as selfish and immature. “According to a recent survey of 191 CDFA (Certified Divorce Financial Analyst) professionals from across North America, the three leading causes of divorce are basic incompatibility (43%), infidelity (28%), and money issues (22%).”¹⁵ Whatever the reasons, divorce seems to be on the high side even among Christians. “Today, some 39% of marriages in the United States are ending in divorce. This data comes from the most recent census data, and there are a number of reasons that couples are deciding to call it quits.”¹⁶ Divorce is not just a United States issue; it is a global issue as well. Research has shown that the rate of divorce is increasing yearly in the 21st century.

Table 1. Global divorce rates (1960-2017)¹⁷

Year	Percent
1960	12
1970	16
1980	26
1990	28
2000	35
2010	41
2017	44

¹⁵ “Survey: Certified Divorce Financial Analyst® (CDFA®) professionals Reveal the Leading Causes of Divorce,” Institute for Divorce Financial Analysts, accessed October 12, 2021, <https://institutedfa.com/Leading-Causes-Divorce/>.

¹⁶ “How Frequently Are People Divorcing in 2020?” *The Daily Campus*, February 21, 2020, <https://www.smudailycampus.com/sponsoredcontent/promoted/how-frequently-are-people-divorcing-in-2020#:~:text=What%20is%20the%20Current%20Divorce,deciding%20to%20call%20it%20quits.>

¹⁷ Mohammad Taghi Sheykhi, “World Perspective of Divorce in Selected Countries: A Sociological Appraisal,” *World Family Medicine* 18(6): 66-70, accessed July 15, 2021, [http://web.a.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.sbts.edu/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=0&sid=359f4691-8862-42b7-b1b7-3c644bf5afc4%40sdc-v-sessmgr02.](http://web.a.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.sbts.edu/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=0&sid=359f4691-8862-42b7-b1b7-3c644bf5afc4%40sdc-v-sessmgr02)

Some of the reasons for divorce include:

1. Money Issues

Financial matters can lead to disagreements of all kinds. Couples sometimes have differing opinions on how to spend their money. “Numerous survey results suggest that money is the most frequent source of spousal conflict.”¹⁸ Some couples find it challenging to agree on money management. If this continues, it gives room for many more issues, which can, over time, lead to divorce.

2. Abuse

Domestic abuse is “an incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening, degrading and violent behavior, including sexual violence, in the majority of cases by a partner or ex-partner, but also by a family member or caregiver. It is very common. In the vast majority of cases, it is experienced by women and is perpetrated by men.”¹⁹

Emotional Abuse “is a way to control another person by using emotions to criticize, embarrass, shame, blame, or otherwise manipulate another person. In general, a relationship is emotionally abusive when there is a consistent pattern of abusive words and bullying behaviors that wear down a person’s self-esteem and undermine their mental health.”²⁰

Sexual Abuse “is unwanted sexual activity, with perpetrators using force, making threats, or taking advantage of victims not able to give consent. Most victims and

¹⁸ Lauren M. Papp, E. Mark Cummings, and Marcie C. Goeke-Morey, “For Richer, for Poorer: Money as a Topic of Marital Conflict in the Home,” December 6, 2011, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3230928/>.

¹⁹ “What is Domestic Abuse?” Women’s Aid, accessed April 5, 2021, <https://www.womensaid.org.uk/information-support/what-is-domestic-abuse/>.

²⁰ Sherri Gordon, “What Is Emotional Abuse?” Very Well Mind, September 17, 2020, <https://www.verywellmind.com/identify-and-cope-with-emotional-abuse-4156673#citation-1>.

perpetrators know each other.”²¹

No matter the kind of abuse, it is destructive. The abused partner is sad, and leaving the marriage becomes the solution to a happier life.

3. Infidelity

Affairs are one of the leading causes of divorce in the world. When a partner becomes involved in an extramarital affair, the other partner becomes heartbroken. Some couples survive affairs; many do not—they separate.

4. Communication Issues

Communication is vital in every relationship; when this skill is missing or poorly managed, friendship is negatively affected and can end.

5. Conflict Management

All kinds of relationships involve conflict management. A marital relationship thrives when both partners learn how to resolve conflicts. Unfortunately, not every married person is skillful in conflict resolution; when this is absent, conflict can worsen, and the marriage can end in divorce.

6. Commitment

Marriage is about commitment. Both partners should be wholeheartedly committed to the relationship. There will always be crises when one or both partners are not fully committed to making the marriage work.

7. Unrealistic Expectations

We all enter marriage with some expectations. We assume our partner should know some, and we expect them to meet our expectations even without telling them. However, some expectations can be unrealistic to one’s partner, and they may never meet them. In such an instance, expectations should be reviewed and adjusted. When this

²¹ “Sexual Abuse,” American Psychological Association, accessed April 5, 2021, <https://www.apa.org/topics/sexual-assault-harassment>.

cannot be done, and one's partner cannot meet the expectation(s), divorce may become the option.

Despite the rate of divorce, it is essential to note that,

Divorce leads to a large number of problems for the separated partners, children, parents of the divorced, etc. Results of divorce are different from country to country according to socio-cultural norms and values of those countries. Children will be the most affected after divorce. They are seriously emotionally affected and will likely not be able to use their potentialities. A cycle of repeated divorces may follow in the years to come too. Adjustment will be hard for the children to pursue. Similarly, the availability of parental care-giving would deteriorate, and the substitutes like grandparents cannot provide the same standards as the parents.²²

God hates divorce "because it is a betrayal of the marriage covenant."²³ He commands that the marriage covenant is valid and must be adhered to until the couple is separated by death. There are several positions on grounds for divorce; the two extremes are "No ground for divorce or remarriage" and "Yes, yes to divorce and remarriage"—no restriction. Andreas Köstenberger argued that:

Despite the presence of divorce in the history of Israel, however, the Old Testament confirms that durability continued to be a component of God's design for marriage. This can be seen in the fact that the Mosaic law seems specific to forbid divorce if the wife was a virgin at the time the marriage was consummated (cf. Deut. 22:19, 29). In addition, it is evident that God does not approve of divorce, for the Old Testament on several occasions uses the analogy of divorce to describe Israel's spiritual apostasy (cf. Isa. 50:1; Jer 3:8), and the prophet Malachi makes clear that God does not approve of divorce motivated by hatred (Mal 2:16).²⁴

God hates divorce; His original plan for marriage excludes divorce (Matt 19:18). Marriage will last for a lifetime if young people patiently wait on the Lord and are true to themselves with their differences when choosing whom to marry. If couples are committed to bringing God glory, pleasing Him with their lives, and are committed making their marriage work while completely depending on God, their marriage will be

²² Sheykhi, "World Perspective of Divorce in Selected Countries," 70.

²³ Newheiser, *Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage*, 9.

²⁴ Andreas Köstenberger, *God, Marriage, and Family: Rebuilding the Biblical Foundation*, 2nd ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books), 2009, 14.

beautiful. Life will be a lot more beautiful if marriages are beautiful, loving, and lasting. One essential help to divorce-proofing one's marriage is not to threaten one's marriage—to “banish divorce from your thoughts.”²⁵

Making Necessary Adjustments

A loving and lasting marriage is a relationship where both partners are committed to making the necessary adjustments to keep the marriage healthy.

Marriage comes with some differences in the way each partner approaches issues. This is because of the different backgrounds, natures, personalities, upbringing of the partners, and the differences in how God created men and women. The good news is we need some differences. Dobson argues that “how boring it would have been for the creator to put Adam to sleep and then fashion yet another man from his rib.”²⁶ Making a marriage work requires understanding one's spouse and being committed to making the necessary adjustment to live in love and unity with him or her. Couples may differ on life issues, circumstances, values, and beliefs. There are several things couples differ about. The differences sometimes make it difficult to find common ground, which creates issues in the marriage. Some of the differences include values, personality, gender, culture, and beliefs. This paper will focus on values, gender, and cultural differences.

Values Differences

People's values are determined through a very long time; it begins from childhood experiences. Values are influenced by family background, nurture, exposure, religion, media, culture, incidents, schooling, friendships, day-to-day experiences—it is an almost endless list. All that an individual has gone through in life, especially from

²⁵ Wayne Parker, “13 Ways to Strengthen a Marriage and Avoid Divorce,” Very Well Mind, March 3, 2020, <https://www.verywellmind.com/strengthen-a-marriage-and-avoid-divorce-1270948>.

²⁶ Dobson, *Love for a Lifetime*, 43.

childhood to young adulthood, determines values. “Our values tend not to shift too much when we get past our early twenties. We all have a tendency, as with beliefs, to look for information to cement the values we already possess and filter out information to the contrary.”²⁷

Shared values are significant for a marriage to be loving, peaceful, and lasting. With substantial value differences, there will be regular conflict. For example, if one spouse holds children highly and the other spouse is a little indifferent, there will be conflict. If one spouse is a spender and the other is frugal, it does not matter how much or how well they communicate; their differences will produce several conflict opportunities. One of the couples my husband and I are presently counseling differ in their values, which is the main issue causing their regular conflict. The wife wants a less workaholic husband; she believes money does not answer all things. She wants the husband to spend more time at home with her and the kids. The husband, however, values his work very much; he believes as a Christian, he needs to work very hard to provide for his family and that only with focus and commitment to his work can he provide for his family.

There are many Christian couples whose marriages end in separation and divorce because of the inability to agree on some values that they hold as very important. Below is a list of some values where couples may differ.²⁸

1. Loving and Being Loved

Love is an essential ingredient in a marriage; however, there are different viewpoints and values on how it is tended and managed. Some people argue that love grows naturally; others value caring, tending, and continuously working on it. The difference in view and value a couple places on love determines how rewarding their

²⁷ Tim Brownson, “The Value of Values,” Sexy Marriage Radio, accessed December 28, 2018, <https://smrnation.com/the-value-of-values/>.

²⁸ Some of the list is from Susan Vogt, “Common Values,” For Your Marriage, accessed December 20, 2018, <http://www.foryourmarriage.org/common-values/>.

marriage will be. An example is when a wife wants to be cared for and pampered by her husband, but the husband acts otherwise; instead of paying attention and caring for his wife, he spends all his time on his work and friends. The wife is hurt, and their love gradually but steadily declines. In many marriages, the wife is left at home with the children, and the husband is always busy with work or friends.

2. Friendship

How many friends do we keep? How stable should our relationships be with friends? People have different values on friendship, and this can affect their marital relationship. Some people give friendship high importance; they spend much time with their friends, sometimes at the expense of their spouse, especially when the marriage is in crisis. However, some people believe that one's spouse and family are the most important person in their lives and should be their best friend.

3. Children

There are different views on children: the need for children in the home, how many children are necessary, what place the child has in the home, and which is more important: one's child or one's spouse. It is best when the couple is on the same page with children and parenting values. Children should not be the reason for conflict; instead, they should be a blessing for the marriage.

4. Devotion to Parents and Extended Family

Though the Scripture is transparent and says, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 'Honor your father and mother'—which is the first commandment with a promise—'so that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth'" (Eph 6:1-3), relationships with extended family is a value that people hold differently. Some people argue that parents are necessary but not as important as one's spouse, which determines how their parents are treated in their home. Others argue that parents are extended family members who are as important as one's

spouse and will take responsibility for their parents just as they take responsibility for their spouse.

5. Generosity/Giving

God has called His children to give, but many believers have a different opinion on giving. While some believers will give their 10 percent and much more, some find it challenging to do. Some contemporary believers argue that tithing is only for the Old Testament. Another point of difference is charity giving—either to the church or the needy. When a couple has significant differences on how they expect to spend their money and how generous they should be, there is an opportunity for conflict.

6. Peacemaking

Conflict is inevitable in life. Husbands and wives argue, quarrel, and fight on several things and sometimes makeup. The making up process, finger-pointing, or even keeping quiet are values that, when different, can lead to more profound issues. A partner may argue that every evil needs to be confronted. In contrast, the other partner may argue differently, calling the confrontation judging.

7. Finances and Spending

People spend and save money differently. One partner may say, “I can spend my money as I like; it is my money. I worked for it and can spend it as I want.” A Christian woman told her husband, “My money is my money; your money is our money,”²⁹ but the husband thinks differently. The husband argues that Christian couples need to put all their individually earned money together to plan and spend it together.

8. Education

People have different values regarding education. Some people argue that education is overrated, while others argue differently. A person's value on education will

²⁹ Anonymous quote from a personal friend. Quoted with approval.

determine how much they invest in it for themselves and their children. Several couples have issues and conflicts on how much priority they need to place on their children's education. Men who neglect to pay attention to their children's schoolwork are often in conflict with women who hold education as highly significant.

9. Conscience Issues³⁰

People argue differently on some issues of life as it relates to their conscience. Examples include listening to secular music, dressing modestly, wearing makeup, medicine usage, tattoos, alcohol consumption, eating habits, taking loans, dating versus courtship, and family devotions. Differences in conscience issues can make or mar a marriage.

Gender Differences

Men and women are very different in their physical, mental, and emotional build. The differences affect their response to life issues, including family issues. "Men and women differ in every cell of their bodies; the difference in the chromosome combination is the basic cause of development into maleness or femaleness as the case may be."³¹ Understanding and adjusting to the differences helps keep a marriage healthy. When a man does not understand how different a woman is, he can make situations worse in an attempt to help. Some key differences between a man and a woman are:

1. Different Brain Systems

God made men and women differ in their brain systems. "Male and female brains differ right down at the genetic level in quite a drastic way. The position and size of the brain are also different. Studies reveal that typically every cell in the male brain contains a Y

³⁰ Stuart Scott, "Marriage and Family counseling," unpublished class notes for 80554A (The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Winter Semester, 2019), 5.

³¹ Dobson, *Love for a Lifetime*, 40.

chromosome. Quite alarmingly, female brains usually contain no Y chromosomes at all! This lack of a Y chromosome has many obvious physical effects.”

2. Different Sexual Makeup

Men and women have physical bodies that differ, and so do their sexual and hormonal makeups. Men and women are different in their sexual wiring and desires. The hormonal makeup of men makes them ready for sex quickly, while it takes a while for a woman to desire and be ready for the pleasure of sex. Women's sexual desire is connected to their monthly cycle, but there is no difference in what day of the month it is with men.

3. Differences in Values

Women tend to value relationships, love, and communication. Men are result-driven. Men are particular about problem-solving, showing, and developing their power skills. Men tend to be self-dependent and seldom ask for help or advice because asking for help is perceived by men as a sign of weakness. Men want to solve issues, and their way of showing love is to render assistance and attempt to fix their wives' issues. Proving one's competence is essential to men; many men prioritize proving that they can achieve their goals. When stressed, men will want to be alone and figure out how to solve their problems by themselves. They feel empowered when they feel needed and when they can effectively solve problems.

Women like to talk, communicate, and have a circle of friends. In contrast to men, women easily share their burdens not just because they want to be helped but to be heard. Women value attentive listening and quality relationships. They also value community, harmony, love, friendship. Their world seems to be the opposite of the men's world. Offering help makes a woman feel loved and valued, and constructive criticism is an act of love. When stressed, women will want to get together with other women to talk about their problems openly. They feel empowered with love and appreciation.

Cultural Differences

Husbands and wives, most of the time, will come from different cultural backgrounds. They may both be raised in the same city, community, or even the same church. Still, as long as they were not raised in the same house, there is a possibility of some cultural difference. Culture plays a vital role in shaping people's values. When people are raised with significant cultural differences, there can be issues in the marriage. Cultural differences can be inter-faith. People from a different faith background, an example is a different denomination, have heard different messages, and may have significant differences in their theology. A friend's marriage almost ended because of their faith differences. The woman had a Baptist background and believed in the priesthood of all believers. In contrast, the husband had a Pentecostal background. He emphasized consulting the pastor before making significant decisions. Culture plays a vital role in people's lives, but couples need to manage their differences biblically.

Managing Differences in Marriage

Conflict and differences, though inevitable in marriage, can be managed in peace. "It is a wise and dedicated husband who desires to understand his wife's psychological needs and then sets out to meet them."³³ Differences can make or mar a marriage relationship depending on how they are managed.

Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. Moreover, overall these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.³⁴

Understanding the Word of God and following it is essential in managing the differences in marriage.

³³ Dobson, *Love for a Lifetime*, 41.

³⁴ Col 3:12-14.

Identify and understand the differences. Couples should talk about their differences; this will help them identify the different areas of concern. Communication is a powerful tool for understanding the other person. Stuart Scott's counsel is to "seek to know your spouse well, appreciate and understand their perspective (1 Pet 3:7)."³⁵ It may take some time, but the differences can be identified and fixed with patience, faith, and focus. It is necessary to understand the perspective of one's spouse. Sometimes it is not a right or wrong answer, but an issue of values built over a very long time. Some values cannot be changed; couples have to live with them. The most important thing is to appreciate and understand the perspectives of one's spouse and love them for who they are.

Agree on compromises. Another way to manage differences is to agree on a mid-point. There may be the need for compromise(s) for peace and oneness. Peacemaking involves negotiation. Ken Sande, in the book *Peacemaking for Families*, emphasized a cooperative and not competitive negotiation. He said, "A competitive attitude is seldom beneficial in marriage. . . . When couples give in to a competitive attitude, they are unlikely to find the best solution to a problem."³⁶ Ken shared a tested cooperative negotiation principle called PAUSE: prepare for the negotiation, affirm relationships, understand interest, search for creative solutions, and evaluate options objectively and reasonably. Christian couples can agree on compromises that will make their marriage stronger. Settling at a mid-point does not mean one spouse is weak; it just indicates that the couple is committed to one another and values their relationship.

³⁵ Stuart Scott, *Communication and Conflict Resolution: A Biblical Perspective* (Bemidji, MN: Focus Publishing, 2005), 22.

³⁶ Ken Sande with Tom Raabe, *Peacemaking for Families: A Biblical Guide to Managing Conflict in Your Home* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2002), 96.

Pray. Prayer is an excellent instrument for all life issues. The Scripture is clear that when we pray, God hears us, “this is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. Also, if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of him” (1 John 5:14-15). Believers need the power of the Holy Spirit to bring God glory through their marriages. It is essential to pray, pray, and pray for God’s help to manage the differences and His help to have a godly and lasting marriage. Jesus said, “Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened” (Matt 7:7-8). God is interested in the prayers of His children; He wants them to ask and has promised that He will answer if they ask according to His will. Couples need to continually pray for their marriages, not just on the differences or issues but also that their marriages will give God glory.

The devil is a fighter who wants to destroy as many homes as possible.

Andreas Köstenberger, in the book *God, Marriage, and Family: Rebuilding the Biblical Foundation*, said:

If God the Creator, in fact as the Bible teaches, instituted marriage and the family, and if there is an evil being called Satan who wages war against God’s creative purpose in the world, it should come as no surprise that the divine foundations of these institutions have come under massive attack in recent years. Ultimately, we human beings, whether we realize it or not, are involved in a cosmic spiritual conflict that puts God against Satan, with marriage and the family serving as a key arena in which spiritual and cultural battles are being fought.³⁷

Christians are to rise and resist the devil in their marriages; our wrestle is not against flesh and blood (Eph 6:12-13). Christian couples should, with prayer, overthrow the power and grip of the devil over their lives and marriages.

³⁷ Köstenberger, *God, Marriage, and Family*, 15

Learn to meet your spouse's needs. “It is good to learn to act right when our spouse acts wrong because it pleases God. It thrills him when we believe what he tells us when we trust him even though it is hard.”³⁸ Christian couples should understand the essential values and needs of their spouses and learn to meet them.

Strength in Differences

Differences come with strength. It is safe to allow differences that strengthen the marriage regardless of what culture and society demand. A Christian husband understood that his wife is strong and can oversee a project from start to finish. She loves having a project to do and does it well. When it was time to build their home, her husband put her in charge of the building, and she did it well. There is strength in differences; couples need to identify their partner's strengths and leverage them.

Conclusion

“Marriage is a wonderful gift from God, through which He enriches our lives, blesses us with children, guards us against temptation, and presents a model to the world of how Jesus Christ loves His church.”³⁹ When God created marriage, He had the good of His creatures in mind. He wanted His creatures to experience companionship and help. He did not create man to be alone. Marriage is a good gift that should give believers joy and not sorrow; beauty and not pain. “Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows” (Jas 1:17). God's plan for marriage has not changed.

Lack of biblical teaching before choosing who to marry and entering the marital institution is a significant reason for the issues in Christian marriages. Dean S. Edell, in his foreword in the book *Fighting for Your Marriage*, argues that “nothing has

³⁸ Vernick, *How to Act Right When Your Spouse Acts Wrong*, 21.

³⁹ Sande and Raabe, *Peacemaking for Families*, 195.

the potential to make us more miserable or more ecstatic than marriage, yet we enter the institution without any training whatsoever.” Just like we need training before we can begin a job or get a license, adequate training is required before anyone ventures into the marriage institution.

Learning God’s standard for marriage and following it helps build a loving and lasting marriage. “Happily married couples are not smarter, richer, or more psychologically astute than others. However, in their day-to-day lives, they have hit upon a dynamic that keeps their negative thoughts and feelings about each other (which all couples have) from overwhelming their positive ones.”⁴¹ Couples need to be committed to themselves and to bringing God glory with their marriage. Differences can be managed with the right attitude, commitment, and love.

Differences severely lead to conflict, but both differences and conflict can be overcome. Sande, in the book *Peacemaking for Families*, shared valuable principles and steps for conflict resolution and reconciliation, some of which are “The Peacemaker’s Pledge,” the “Seven A’s of Forgiveness,” and the “PAUSE Principle of Negotiation,” all within a biblical worldview. Steps are essential in bringing people from where they are to where they ought to be. Maps are easier when there are detailed steps to follow. Sande’s step is a map that helps readers understand what to do, how to do it and checks that the expected results are achieved. Sande argued that “God is eager to display the wonders of the gospel in the midst of our marital and family conflicts so that He can reveal the life-changing power of His son, Jesus Christ.”⁴² Conflict produces an evil effect on marriage; couples need to overcome this evil with good (Rom 12:21).

Marriages can work today with the right skills, commitment, desires, and work. For a marriage to work, last, and be peaceful, it must have its foundation in Christ.

⁴¹ Dobson, *Love for a Lifetime*, 56.

⁴² Sande and Raabe, *Peacemaking for Families*, 12

Dobson argued that “the honing process usually occurs in the first year or two of marriage. This is when the foundation for the home is laid. It is a time for a dramatic struggle for power in the relationship.”⁴³ Couples need to depend on God for help and be committed to ensuring the right foundations are laid.

It is possible to get through the issues; it is possible to survive and soar higher with the right skills, determination, help, focus, and belief in God. Mike Mason argues, “One thing that is very important to know in marriage is that there is always a way out. So, the way out is not divorce! No, the way out in marriage (no matter how bad things may get) is to put everything we have back on the line, our whole hearts and lives, just as we did the moment we took our vows.”⁴⁴

⁴³ Dobson, *Love for a Lifetime*, 56.

⁴⁴ Mike Mason, *The Mystery of Marriage* (Portland, OR: Multnomah Press, 1985), 125.

CHAPTER 4

DETAILS AND DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT

This chapter describes and details the implementation of the project. It details the weekly events that helped achieve the goals of the project. The project had three goals; the first was to assess the married life of fifteen members of OPGC Manitoba, Canada. The second goal was to develop a six-lessons manual for counseling couples in troubled marriages and singles in their preparation for marriage. The third goal was to increase knowledge on biblical marriage by teaching the six-lessons manual to OPGC couples in a marriage enrichment conference. These goals served as a guide in the preparation of the lessons for this project.

The author also interviewed two couples to understand their perspectives on marriage and understand how biblical principles can help better their marital relationships. The interview was not one of the project instruments. Still, the respondents requested such an opportunity to help with their marital issues. One of the interview participants permitted the author to share her story:

I got married to Chris fifteen years ago. We thought we were prepared for the responsibilities and the roles each of us would play in our marriage, but we were wrong! We were not prepared. The church was supposed to prepare us, and we thought they did, with all the conferences we attended. However, we soon discovered that they seemed to tell us only theories and not practical life issues. Once we were married, we found ourselves facing real-life issues. What is submission, and who submits to who? As the woman, can't I have a say? Must my husband always have his way? Things were not as rosy as we thought, and some of our friends also had similar issues.¹

In today's world, great marriages are hard to come by, but they do exist. God

¹ Personal story from an anonymous project seminar participant.

instituted marriage as a good thing. It is a means of companionship that should make life more rewarding, give us hope, and comfort in times of need. Unfortunately, the world has redefined marriage. For marriages to work, we must do it the biblical way. We must understand and accept the mind of God, who created and sustains both life and marriage, plug into that understanding, and build our homes on the foundation of Christ, the solid rock.

The details of the project are broken down into sub-sections with durations. Below is a brief description of each subsection, including a summary of the lessons.

Preparation Period

The first period of the project involved fourteen weeks of preparation (Weeks 1-13).

Lesson 1²

During weeks one and two, I wrote the first lesson of the Couple's Manual.

In the beginning³

1. God created men and women but made them different (Gen 2:7, 21-24).
2. He originated marriage and gave the blueprint for making it work (Gen 2:18-25).
3. If we build our marriage on God's pattern, it will work not just for us but for others coming behind (Josh 1:8).
4. The critical question is how can we have a beautiful and lasting relationship with someone so different from us? And the solution is God's way. God's way is Oneness;

² All six lessons were presented in PowerPoint format. Though there were several discussions, the idea of PowerPoint is to call out key take-aways for participants. It is to ensure that amid the stories, the key lessons are emphasized.

³ In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth (Gen 1:1) and everything in it. God instituted marriage also in the beginning (Gen 2:18-25). He is the author of marriage; He has a plan from the beginning. The six lessons for this project are linked to God as the author of marriage. He has a plan from the beginning of what marriage should be, of the best practices and the solution to making it loving and lasting.

“So they are no longer two but one” (Matt 19:6).

Lesson 2

During weeks three and four, I wrote lesson two of the Couple’s Manual.

How do we become one?

1. Have a personal and genuine relationship with God (Luke 5:16; 2 Tim 2:15; 3:16; 2 Thess 5:17).
 - i. Let nothing steal your daily time alone with God.
 - ii. Let nothing steal your daily time alone with God and your spouse.
 - iii. Grow in your faith.
 - iv. Grow in desire for and obedience to God (Rom 10:17).
2. Manage expectations.

“An expectation is one person placing self-made obligations on the other person, without the other person’s input, understanding, consent, or even knowing the obligations are there.”⁴

Expectations can be realistic, achievable, or unrealistic. This is the problem—who defines what is realistic and what is not? One person’s reality maybe the other person’s illusion and essence.

Some common expectations create issues in the home because they are realistic and achievable to only one partner. Expectations are better managed when they are realistic and achievable to both partners. Couples can manage each other’s expectations by following the guidelines below.

- i. Talk about your expectations.
- ii. Clarify them with your spouse.

⁴ Dan and Carol Ohler, “Why Expectations Can Be Dangerous – And What To Do Instead,” Dan & Carol: Relationships by Design, accessed May 15, 2021, <https://www.danandcarol.com/e-zine-archives/why-expectations-can-be-dangerous-and-what-to-do-instead/>.

- iii. Re-examine each other's expectations together in line with the Scripture.
- iv. Be open to compromises and find common ground. Rework your expectations.
- v. Do not take each other for granted but bear with each other.
- vi. Be committed to meeting your spouse's reworked, realistic expectations.

Lesson 3

During weeks five and six, I wrote lesson three of the couple's manual.

Communication: Talk, chat, have fun together

1. Communication grows friendship.
2. Marriage grows stronger with friendship.
3. Who is your chatting partner?

How can one grow communication with one's spouse? Build emotional intimacy. "The lack of emotional intimacy can easily dry out a marriage and leave you with a roommate instead of a husband or wife."⁵

Staying in love

1. Love must be kindled; it must be refueled continually. The good news is that with commitment, love can grow.
2. Learn what love means to your spouse and be committed to meeting your spouse's needs.
3. It would help if you never assumed that your spouse knew what you wanted. You must *tell them, tell them and tell them again*.

Continue to keep love alive (Col 3:12-13; 2 Cor 13:4-8) by:

- i. Caring for each other. "You mean you did this for me?"

⁵ Celeste, "Emotional Intimacy," Lessy's World, July 11, 2014, <https://lessysworld.com/emotional-intimacy/>.

- ii. Playing together—find the time.
- iii. Investing in your spouse’s emotional bank account.
- iv. Re-doing the courtship days.
- v. Doing laughable things—add a sense of humor.

Lesson 4

During weeks seven and eight, I wrote lesson four of the Couple’s Manual.

They have defined roles and responsibilities.

Roles and responsibilities should be defined by the Scripture and one’s family specifics. The Scripture is clear on role variation between the husband and the wife. The husband is to love and respect his wife (Eph 5:25-33; Col 3:19; 1 Pet 3:7). Every wife should submit to her husband (Eph 5:21-24; Col 3:18). Submission does not mean the wife is a moron or has no say in the home; it just means she willingly accepts her husband as the leader and willingly follows his directions.

The will of the Father was more important to Jesus than equality. God’s will for marriage should be more important than one’s will or equality.

Lesson 5

During weeks nine and ten, I wrote lesson five of the Couple’s Manual.

Common marital issues.

This lesson is to discuss some common marital issues and how to manage them. Some of the common marital problems are:

1. Differences.
2. Unmet needs.
3. Conflict resolution.
4. Third-party influence.

5. Different parental styles (an example is Isaac and Rebekah).
6. Spousal abuse.

Permit idiosyncrasies. Your spouse does not need to lose their identity because they are married to you.

Lesson 6

During weeks eleven and twelve, I wrote lesson six of the Couple's Manual.

Unmet needs: sexual fulfillment.

We all have needs, and unmet needs are the leading underlying factors behind most couples' disputes and disappointments because they are needs and not wants. "Do not deprive each other except perhaps 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" (1 Cor 7:5).

Unmet needs: recreational activities.

Be interested in your spouse's recreational activities; it builds friendship. You will have things to talk about; You will grow emotionally together.

Unmet needs: conversation

Your wife likes to talk; listen to her.

Some Salient Principles

1. Love is patient.
2. Love is kind.
3. Love does not keep a record of wrong.
4. Bear with each other. Have a large window of tolerance. Your spouse is not you; give them time to make needed adjustments.
5. God is the way to make a marriage work.

Evaluation

During weeks thirteen and fourteen, the author met with leaders of OPGC Manitoba Canada to discuss and evaluate the manual, teaching method, and deployment sessions.

The leadership team of OPGC was given a copy of the manual (Appendix 3). They had to study it and evaluate it based on biblical standards and whether it was sufficient to achieve the project’s purpose. Below is a summary of the teaching manual evaluation.

Table 2. Marriage manual evaluation tool result

Marriage Study Evaluation Tool					
Lessons to be Evaluated: Lessons 1-5					
1= Insufficient 2=Requires attention 3=Sufficient 4=Exemplary					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
The material is clearly relevant to the issue of building the right foundation for marriage.				4	Understanding the biblical principles for marriage is essential to building the right foundation for marriage. The manual clearly presented these principles with supporting Bible references.
The material is biblical and theologically consistent.				4	God is the author of marriage. He alone has the blueprint for making marriage loving and lasting.
The material includes vital information for the Christian couple.				4	Yes, there is biblical information for couples in the manual, some of which may be difficult for today’s couples to accept and follow. However, it is the truth, and the Word of God and is needed to ensure a loving and lasting marriage.
The material clearly lays out the principle for a loving, lasting marriage.				4	Yes, the focus is biblical.

Table 2 Continued

The points of the material clearly support the purpose laid out in the thesis and are easy to grasp.			3		Points clearly support project purpose, but some may be difficult for today's couple, especially issues like submission and unmet needs. Couples need the Holy Spirit to follow God's principles. The author needs to emphasize the Holy Spirit's role as a helper and enabler for the believer in all aspects of life.
The lesson contains points of practical application.				4	The examples are very practical, and the assignments given at the end of the class will enable couples to improve their relationships.
The lesson is sufficiently thorough in its coverage of the material.				4	—
Overall, the lesson is clear and could be re-taught by another person.				4	We look forward to several sessions in the future with the same material as new learnings and refreshers for our church members. Overall, it is a recommendable manual for a loving and lasting marriage. The lesson should be turned into a book with a practical workbook and made available to the body of Christ.

The leaders of OPC evaluated the training manual. The summary above shows a high confidence level of the leaders that the manual can help achieve the purpose and goals of the project. Comments are noted in the evaluation tool above. They were helpful and were incorporated into the final edit of the lessons.

Project Implementation

The next period of the project involved three weeks of project implementation (Weeks 15-17).

During Week fifteen, I sent an invitation to the proposed participants with a link to the pre-survey questionnaire. Before the seminar, potential participants were sent an invitation that clearly explained the seminar's objectives and how it could help couples build the proper foundation for a loving, lasting marriage. The participants were also notified of the reason for a pre-and post-survey; it was emphasized that the survey was optional and anonymous. The pre-survey questions (Appendix 1) were sent to the participants a week before the conference. Participants were encouraged to fill out the questionnaire before the seminar. The survey was meant to assess participants' spiritual disciplines and practices and their understanding and expectations for marriage. Twenty people participated in the pre-survey.

During week sixteen, I taught all the lessons to couples on a weekend via Zoom because of gathering restrictions in Manitoba, Canada. The initial plan was to teach the lessons in a couple's "get-away weekend"; however, due to COVID-19 constraints, the lessons were taught online via Zoom. There were three sessions on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. Two lessons were taught per session. Thirty individuals attended the sessions; twenty-five participated in all sessions.

Follow Up and Analysis

The next period of the project involved eight weeks of follow up and survey analysis (Weeks 18-26).

During weeks eighteen to twenty, participants were reminded of lessons from the seminar. Two to three weeks after the couple's seminar, the author reminded participants of critical steps and practices for a loving, lasting marriage through social media and church meetings.

During weeks twenty-one and twenty-three, participants were encouraged to participate in the post-survey. Four to six weeks after the couple's seminar, the author reminded participants of critical steps and practices for a loving, lasting marriage. Each

participant got a notification of highlights from the seminar and a link to participate in the post-survey. Fifteen took part in the post-survey out of the participants who had earlier participated in the pre-survey. The post-survey assessed an increase in knowledge due to insights from the conference and improvement in marriage practice based on the learning from the conference.

During weeks twenty-four to twenty-six, the pre-and post-survey results were analyzed. The pre-and post-surveys were analyzed for increased knowledge using mean and t-test for dependent samples. A detailed comparison of the pre-and post-surveys is in Chapter 5 below.

Conclusion

Faith comes by hearing, hearing the Word of God (Rom 10:17). Learning is the process of acquiring new knowledge, understanding, and knowing, such that the newly learned truth can be practiced.⁶ Learning helps a person choose the right priorities, determine the implications of the priorities, and choose the right practices based on the new-found truth. The lessons from the seminar are aimed at helping the participants understand the biblical principles and solutions to building a loving and lasting relationship. I was encouraged by the attendees—though it took a lot of work to get people to attend because of the pandemic. Still, I was glad they did, and the outcome of the pre-and post-survey inspired me.

People can learn and make significant changes in their life if given the opportunity. Marriage can be full of surprises; men marry Rachel and find Leah in their bedroom. However, with new insights and the Holy Spirit, people can change; marriages can become better. I am hopeful that participants will continue to apply the things they

⁶ John David Trentham, “Essence of Discipleship,” unpublished class notes for 45400 (The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fall Semester, 2018), 4.

learned from the lesson and continue to work on their marriages, giving glory to God.

CHAPTER 5

EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT

This project is a dream come true for me. I had taught marriage classes both with singles and married individuals. I have co-lead a marriage radio show for over five years but with no manual, only a few notes here and there. This project became an opportunity for me to finally put together a manual that can be used in conferences and church settings to teach singles and married individuals biblical principles for a loving and lasting marriage.

Evaluation of the Project's Purpose

The purpose of this project is to help believers at OPGC lay the right foundations for their marriages. I wanted to understand participants' expectations for marriage and their view on building a Christ-centered marriage. This was to help in developing teaching lessons that would aid their growth from where they are to what God expects marriage to be. The pre-survey gave a glimpse into participants' views about marriage and helped determine what subject areas to focus on in the lessons. The purpose of helping believers build the right foundation for marriage was accomplished by teaching participants the biblical principles for a loving and lasting marriage. The test results prove that the project objectives were achieved. There was a significant increase in knowledge of God's standard for marriage. Participants also confirmed through the post-survey an improvement in marriage practice.

One of the critical lessons from this conference is that every believer must be

intentional and consistent in their personal devotional time. People cannot give what they do not have; loving and practicing marriage the way God intended for His children requires having a personal relationship with Jesus, which involves spiritual disciplines such as personal time alone with God to read the Bible and pray. The test results showed increased personal time for prayers and reading the Bible between the pre-and post-survey.

Evaluation of the Project's Goals

The first goal was to assess the married lives of fifteen members of OPGC, Manitoba, Canada. This goal was achieved with the pre-survey form. The pre-survey form evaluated participants' understanding of biblical marriage, their level of preparation for marriage, and their current marriage practices. The pre-survey evaluation also helped in editing the lessons to meet participants' needs.

The second goal was to develop a manual for counseling couples in troubled marriages and singles in their preparation for marriage. The manual was developed; it is a six-lessons teaching guide. It was taught to members of OPGC during a three-session weekend program. The manual can be used for subsequent marriage conferences and seminars; it can also be used as a counseling guide for "about to wed" singles.

The third goal was to increase knowledge on biblical marriage by teaching the six-lesson manual to couples in OPGC. During the project, a six-lesson manual was developed, which was taught to the participants of the marriage enrichment conference after evaluation by the leaders of OPGC. The post-survey evaluation affirms that this goal was achieved because of the significant increase from pre-survey to post-survey responses. The table below is the result of some of the survey questions. It shows a significant increase in knowledge.

Table 3. Comparison of pre-and post-survey responses

Survey Question	Pre-Survey Average Response	Post-Survey Average Response	Percentage Increase
I understand what the Bible teaches about roles and responsibilities in marriage	5.3	5.8	10
I know several key biblical texts that explain the marital union.	4.7	5.4	14
I can explain some differences between men and women	4.8	5.5	13
I can explain some biblical principles in Ephesians 5:21-33	5.0	5.5	10
I can explain God’s purpose for my marriage from a biblical standpoint	5.3	5.5	5
I read my Bible and pray daily	4.4	5.4	22
Using Scripture, I can lead my family to faith in Christ	4.9	5.5	11
My spouse and I communicate freely	5.0	5.5	11
I am interested in my spouse’s recreational activities	4.7	5.3	13
My husband is the leader in my home	5.1	5.4	6
I am submissive to my husband	4.6	5.1	11
I have no reason to threaten my marriage	5.0	5.6	13
I understand what love means to my husband	4.8	5.3	10
I understand what respect means to my husband	4.7	5.5	16
I care for my husband and show it	4.7	5.5	16
I am the leader in my home	4.4	5.2	18
I understand what love means to my wife	5.0	5.7	13
I always listen to my wife	4.4	5.3	20

Overall, there was a 5 to 20 percent increase in knowledge and marital practice. One important survey question for me is, “I read my Bible every day.” Believers

cannot understand and obey God’s directives if they do not read the Scriptures. It is important that this project has helped educate more people on personal Bible reading. There is significant progress in some of the participants in their commitment to spending time meditating on the Word of God daily. One of the participants also shared that the importance of spending time with God is a significant takeaway for her.

Another critical change is who leads the home. One of the major problems in marriages today is husbands who do not lead and wives who are not ready to submit to their husbands’ leadership. With the teaching, there was a 6 percent increase in the number of women who see a change in their husbands taking over leading the home and an 18 percent increase in men who accept their role as leaders in the home.

Table 4. Comparison of the leadership question

Question	Average Response Pre-Survey	Average Response Post-Survey	Percentage Increase
My husband is the leader in my home	5.1	5.36	4.9
I am the leader in my home (men only)	4.4	5.17	14.9

When men accept and respond to their God-given responsibility of leading their home, the marriage is moving in the right direction.

There was an average of 11 percent increase in understanding how to show love to one’s spouse. Love is an essential ingredient in building a loving and lasting marriage. When love is missing, dying, or dead, the marriage is at the point of collapsing. From the lessons, couples understood the importance of love in a marriage relationship and consistently showed love to their spouse. The post-survey responses show that more men and women understand this vital ingredient. I hope and pray they will keep the passion growing.

Table 5. Results of t-test for dependent samples

	Sample 1	Sample 2
Mean	135.9333333	141.2666667
Variance	172.0666667	254.0666667
Observations	15	15
Pearson Correlation	0.486565214	—
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	—
Df	14	—
t Stat	-1.38425708	—
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.093974498	—
t Critical one-tail	1.761310136	—
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.187948996	—
t Critical two-tail	2.144786688	—

Overall, the project delivered on its purpose and goals. The t-test for dependent samples demonstrated a positive, statistically significant difference between pre-and post-survey scores: $t(14) = -1.384$, $p = 0.094$.

Strengths of the Project

There are several great things about this project. Some of these strengths are as follows.

The Manual

The top strength of this project is developing a manual used in teaching biblical principles to twenty-five couples who shared testimonies of how the teaching has taught them new things and encouraged them to continue to work hard on their

marriages. The manual will continue to be used for future marriage seminars for married couples and singles preparing for marriage.

Use of Real-Life Stories

The use of illustrations and real-life stories gave clarity to the project. Several real-life Christian marriage stories were shared (anonymously and with couples' approval) as examples for other couples. With the real-life stories, the participants could clearly see their family's situations in some of these issues and learn how to manage and come out of the crises they may be in. The lessons clarified that problems happen in marriages, and different examples were also shared on how to solve the issues. The lessons did not only focus on real-life examples and case studies but also biblical problem-solving models.

Couple's Attendance

Marriage seminars are more effective when both partners are present listening to the same message. More than 70 percent of the attendees were couples. There was a lot of promotion and encouragement to get both partners to attend the seminar. This had a positive impact on the project's results. When husband and wife listen to the same message and agree on applying the insights to their marriage, the home will be loving and peaceful.

Weaknesses of the Project

There are several areas of opportunity for improvements as well. Some areas of improvement are as follows.

Omission of a Critical Marital Issue

The lesson had several examples of common marital issues and how they can be managed biblically. One miss, however, was irreconcilable differences. I have had

several divorce cases, even with ministers of the gospel, because of irreconcilable differences. Irreconcilable difference is a conflict where compromise does not seem to be an option; both the husband and the wife have a position they do not want to compromise. Though several practical examples were shared, I should have included more complex issues, especially issues associated with irreconcilable differences and solutions for hurting families. Even when the differences seem irreconcilable, there is a way out, and the world needs to be taught how.

Timeline

Marriage is supposed to be a lifelong event, meaning we keep learning as we grow older together. The timeline for this project is a limitation and a weakness for the needed learning. Three sessions and six lessons are insufficient to build a heart that will follow Jesus's standard for marriage; however, there is a need for continual learning for more effective marital growth. On top of the lessons, there is a need for a regular annual or biannual gathering for more teaching on making marriage work, especially in a world where the marital union is collapsing, people are choosing to cohabit instead of getting married, and the rate of divorce is on the rise.

Lack of Face-to-Face Interactions

Another major weakness of the project was the mode of delivery. The world's landscape has changed, and there are more online meetings and conferences today than ever before. Though online meeting produces good results, face-to-face meetings are better. I do not have research numbers to prove this point, but when people leave the comfort of their homes and go to church or other conference centers, distractions are reduced. For a conference involving couples and assignments, there will be more opportunities for couples to do their assignments during the meeting if it is face-to-face instead of online. There is a higher possibility that the assignments will be done than

when it is taken home.

Things I Would Do Differently

This project is very impactful not just for me but for my family as well. There are many insights and several things I will do differently when given the opportunity in the future. Some of which are:

1. I will involve more friends in the planning and execution. I wish I had more help in the planning than I got. In the future, I will ask for help and delegate part of the planning to friends to manage the stress associated with planning a conference. I will also use more help in conference promotion and mobilization so that more people can enjoy the blessings of a loving and lasting marriage.
2. I will share more real-life stories so that couples can learn from them. Seeing is believing; when people notice that they are not alone in their struggles and learn how others manage them, they will be motivated to work on their personal struggles and trust what God can do.
3. Before writing the lessons, I will do the pre-survey to understand my audience better and write lessons that will be more beneficial to their needs. Though the manual was well written and effective, there is an opportunity for improvement.
4. I will also publicize the conference to attract couples outside my church so that more people will experience the blessings of a marriage built on Christ.

Theological Reflections

God instituted marriage to last for a lifetime. He authored marriage for love, harmony, and companionship between the couple as long as they both shall live.

Unfortunately, many marriages today end in a type of separation or divorce. Scholars have argued that only one or two out of ten marriages will achieve intimate friendship, commitment, and deep understanding. This is because there is confusion in contemporary culture on what marriage should be.

The foundation for marriage is God, and in Him alone can couples find the way to a godly and lasting married life (Eph 5:1-2). Marriage will thrive and last when couples follow God's road map for it. God has revealed Himself and His will in the Scriptures; He has revealed His plan for marriage in the Scriptures. Following Him will produce the beauty that He created. Following Him will help couples lovingly commit to one another and enjoy bliss and happiness that will last for a lifetime.

God created two different beings—male and female. We are different, we reason differently, our skills are different, but these differences in God's plan are supposed to be strength for the family. If each person plays to their strength, the family becomes stronger, and together the two become better than one.

God's standard on difference is clear; He gave different roles to husbands and wives. Ephesians 5:22 says, "Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord." The husband is the head who is responsible for the family. The wife should see and honor him as such. The wife is not a moron who cannot think or have a choice of her own, but God expects that her thoughts and desires be brought under the husband's leadership. I know it is very tough to submit, especially when the man is not as loving as the woman would like, but submission can help teach him to love. Wives should continue to pray for the grace to submit and to trust in their husband. Wives should pray for their husband (prayer changes things, God can help you refocus his mind to loving you more) and teach him how to show love.

What does the Bible mean by, "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her" (Eph 5:2)? The man loves his wife just as

himself; therefore, he submits to her needs while he seeks good for her all the days of his life. He is not a lord over her, but a crown, a shield, a cover, a supporter, a shoulder to cry on, a place she can always come to and be comforted. Jesus loved the church and gave Himself for her—that is love. Love prefers the other person, is not puffed up, but bears the other person's weakness (1 Cor 13:4-7). Christian husbands should seek to bring out the best in their wives; showing love aids submission.

Marriage is not a competition. There is no need for competition between the husband and the wife. Instead, marriage is for companionship and support. It is the place where one iron sharpens the other iron, making the other iron stronger and better (Prov 27:17). It is okay if you do not get it right on day one; God expects us to continue to work on our marriages to make them better.

Personal Reflections

When God created marriage, He had the good of His creatures in mind. He wanted us to experience true companionship, have children, and be protected from temptation. Marriage is a beautiful gift, a good gift that should give believers joy, not sorrow and pain. "Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows" (Jas 1:17). God's plan for marriage has not changed.

Marriage has the potential to make a person's life miserable or blissful. Still, most people enter into marriage without any training. Lack of getting the needed training before choosing who to marry and entering the marital institution is a significant reason for some of the issues in Christian marriages. Just like we need training before we can begin a job or get a license, adequate training is also needed before anyone ventures into the marriage institution.

Marriages can work today with the right skills, commitment, desires, and work. For a marriage to work, last, and be peaceful, it must have its foundation in Christ. The

first few years are crucial; it is the time when the sharpening usually occurs when the foundations are laid. Couples need to depend on God for help and be committed to ensuring the right foundations are laid for their marriage.

It is possible to get through issues; it is possible to survive and soar higher with the right skills, determination, help, focus, and belief in God. There is always a way out, but the way out is not divorce! No, the way out is to retrace our steps and put back our whole hearts and lives as we did when we took our vows. We should follow the example of Christ and seek the good of the other. “No one should seek their good, but the good of others. (1 Cor 10:24).

Conclusion

Marriage can be beautiful, fun, and exciting, but many times it is not. For some people, the pieces do not come together. My husband and I have met and counseled several couples who have confessed Jesus as their Lord, who love the Lord, and seem faithful in serving Him. However, their marriage is not blissful. Instead, it is full of pain, agony, and sometimes it is threatened.

A good marriage is not about perfection but a relationship where multitudes of unresolvable problems are overlooked. A renowned scholar said, “Happily married couples are not smarter, richer, or more psychologically astute than others. However, in their day-to-day lives, they have hit upon a dynamic that keeps their negative thoughts and feelings about each other (which all couples have) from overwhelming their positive ones.”¹

Marriage is a covenant of mutual love. It is a love that overlooks the other person’s faults, and it is love that forbears and forgives each other (Col 3:12-14).

¹ James Dobson, *Love for a Lifetime: Building a Marriage That Will Go the Distance* (Portland, OR: Multnomah Books, 1987), 56.

Marriage is a covenant of mutual submission. Christ is the Lord of both the man and the woman, and to Him, we will give an account. The husband is not the lord but the lover who listens to his wife, and they both agree on how to manage their relationship. The woman is the co-partner who listens to her husband in love and reverence and works in agreement with him as they manage their home.

My counsel to Christian couples is that no matter the condition of your marriage, Christ can give you healing if you are open to Him and ready to cooperate with Him to do what only He can do for your family. Take a new look at your attitude, love, submission to your spouse, and allow God to heal and help you make the necessary adjustments.

APPENDIX 1

COUPLE'S MARRIAGE FOUNDATION AND PRACTICE SURVEY

The following survey was used to assess the understanding and expectations before marriage and after the wedding celebration of members of OPGC. It helped to understand their preparations for marriage as well as the status of their marriage.

COUPLE'S MARRIAGE FOUNDATION
AND PRACTICE SURVEY

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to identify the expectations of couples before marriage, foundations laid for their marriage, and their love life. Temitope Omoniyi is conducting this research to collect data for a ministry project. In this research, you will answer questions before the project and answer similar questions after a get-a-away weekend with your spouse. Any information you provide will be held strictly confidential. At no time will your name be reported or identified with your responses. Participation is voluntary, and you are free to withdraw at any time. By completing this survey, you are giving informed consent to use your responses in this project.

I agree to participate

I do not agree to participate

Section I

The first section of this questionnaire will obtain some demographic information.

Directions: Answer the following multiple-choice questions by placing a check next to the appropriate answer.

1. How long have you been married?

___ A. 0-5

___ B. 6-10

___ C. 11-15

___ D. 16-20

___ E. 21-25

___ F. 26 and over

2. Are you a leader in the church (Sunday School Teacher, Small Group Leader, Nursery Volunteer, Staff Member, Worship Ministries Member, etc.)?

___ A. Yes

___ B. No

3. How long have you been a believer?
 ___ A. 0-5
 ___ B. 6-10
 ___ C. 11-15
 ___ D. 16-20
 ___ E. 21-25
 ___ F. 26 and over
4. What is your age in years?
 ___ A. 18-24
 ___ B. 25-34
 ___ C. 35-44
 ___ D. 45-54
 ___ E. 55-64
 ___ F. 65 and over

Part 2: Biblical Foundations

Directions: Answer the questions and statements below using the following options:
 (1) place a check by multiple-choice answers, and (2) based on the following scale, circle the option that best represents your agreement with the statement:
 SD = Strongly Disagree, D = Disagree, DS = Disagree Somewhat,
 AS = Agree Somewhat, A = Agree, SA = Strongly Agree.

- | | | | | | | |
|---|----|---|----|----|---|----|
| 5. I understand what the Bible teaches about roles and responsibilities in marriage | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 6. I understand what the Bible teaches about the marriage covenant | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 7. I can explain the difference between men and women | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 8. I know several key biblical texts that explains the marital union | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 9. I can explain the biblical principles in Ephesians 5: 21-6:4. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 10. I can explain the importance of Christian marriage. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 11. I can explain God’s purpose for my marriage from a biblical standpoint. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 12. I can explain the message of | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |

the gospel.

- | | | | | | | |
|--|----|---|----|----|---|----|
| 13. I have an understanding of what it means to be a disciple of Christ. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 14. Using Scripture, I can lead my family to faith in Christ. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 15. I read my Bible and pray daily. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |

Part 3: Loving, lasting Marriage Practice

- | | | | | | | |
|--|----|---|----|----|---|----|
| 16. I am in love with my spouse. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 17. My spouse and I communicate freely. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 18. I am interested in my spouse recreational activity | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 19. My spouse and I trust each other. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 20. I am happy in my marriage. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 21. I enjoy and look forward to physical intimacy with my spouse | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 22. I was well prepared for marriage. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |

Questions for men

- | | | | | | | |
|---|----|---|----|----|---|----|
| 23. I am a leader in my home | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 24. My wife is submissive to me | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 25. I have no reason to threaten my marriage. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 26. I understand what love means to my wife. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 27. I care for my wife and show it. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 28. I always listen to my wife | | | | | | |
| 29. I often buy my wife gifts | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |

Questions for women

- | | | | | | | |
|----------------------------------|----|---|----|----|---|----|
| 30. My husband leader in my home | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
|----------------------------------|----|---|----|----|---|----|

- | | | | | | | |
|--|----|---|----|----|---|----|
| 31. I am submissive to my husband | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 32. I have no reason to threaten my marriage. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 33. I understand what love means to my husband. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 34. I understand what respect means to my husband. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 35. I care for my husband and show it. | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |
| 36. I often buy my husband gifts | SD | D | DS | AS | A | SA |

Personal Identification Number: _____

APPENDIX 2

MARRIAGE MANUAL RUBRIC

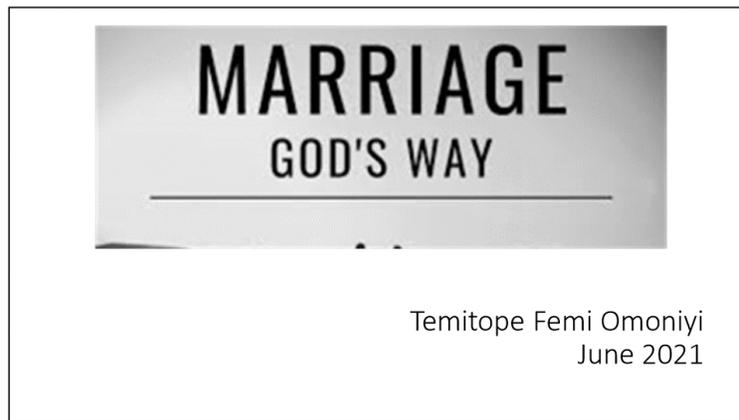
The following rubric was used to evaluate the marriage study guide developed by the author and distributed to the panel described in the goal section of Chapter 1.

MARRIAGE MANUAL RUBRIC

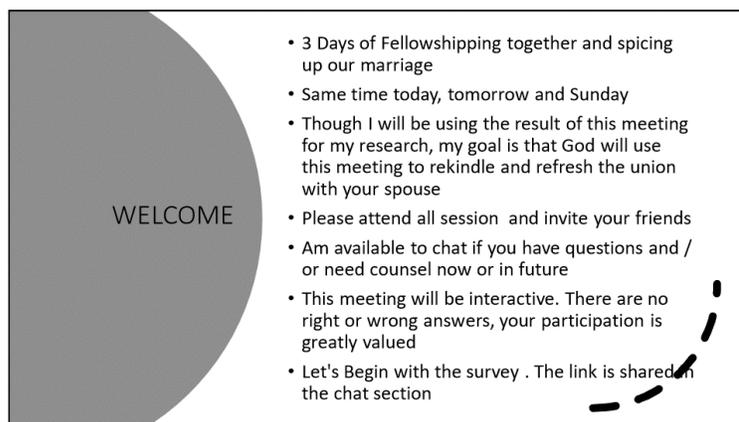
Marriage Study Evaluation Tool					
Lesson to be Evaluated:					
1= insufficient 2=requires attention 3= sufficient 4=exemplary					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
The material is clearly relevant to the issue of building the right foundation for marriage.					
The material is biblical and theologically consistent.					
The material includes vital information for the Christian couple.					
The material clearly lays out the principle for a loving, lasting marriage.					
The points of the material clearly support the purpose laid out in the thesis and are easy to grasp.					
The lesson contains points of practical application.					
The lesson is sufficiently thorough in its coverage of the material.					

Overall, the lesson is clear and could be re-taught by another person.					
--	--	--	--	--	--

APPENDIX 3
TEACHING MANUAL¹



1



2

¹ Pictures and illustrations used for this presentation are free to use pictures from Google search.

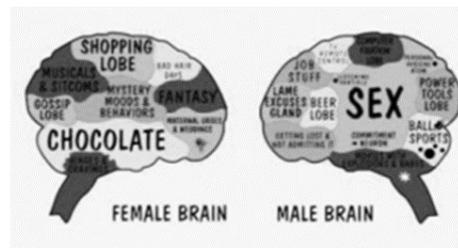
In The Beginning

- God created men and women but made them different (Gen 2: 7, 21-24)
- He originated marriage and gave the blueprint of how to make it work (Gen 2: 18 -25)
- If we build our marriage on God's pattern it will work not just for us but for others coming behind (Joshua 1: 8)

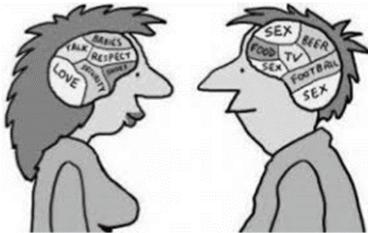


3

Gender Differences



4



Gender Differences

	Male	Female
Different Brain System	Some regions are bigger in size, Hormone Testosterone, Y Chromosome,	Some regions are smaller in size, Hormone estrogen, X Chromosome,
Sexuality	Natural high desire for sex, high testosterone, ready for sex with sight	Natural low desire for sex, low testosterone, sex desire based on ovulation circle, mood
Information Processing	more logical, analytical, rational.	more intuitive, holistic, creative, integrative
Stress Management	"fight or flight" response to stress situations	"tend or befriend" strategy.

The key question is how do we have a beautiful and lasting relationship with someone so different from us 

5

Gender Differences

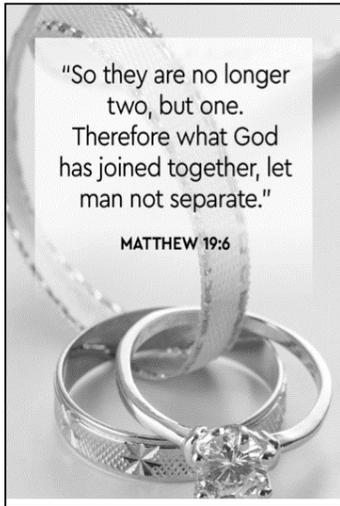
 The key question is how do we have a beautiful and lasting relationship with someone so different from us



6

"So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate."

MATTHEW 19:6




7

How do we become ONE

Have a personal and real relationship with God
 (Lk 5: 16, II Tim 2: 15, 3: 16, II Thess. 5: 17)

1. Let nothing steal your daily time alone with God
2. Let nothing steal your daily time alone with God and your spouse
3. Grow in your faith, grow in desire and obedience to God (Rm 10: 17)



8



How do we become ONE

“It takes three to sustain love , not two: you, your spouse, and God. Without God people only succeed in bringing out the worst in one another. Lovers who have nothing else to do but love each other soon find there is nothing else. Without a central loyalty life is unfinished.”—
Fulton J. Sheen,

9

How do we become ONE

Have a personal and real relationship with God

(Lk 5: 16, II Tim 2: 15, 3: 16, II Thess. 5: 17)



ONE OF THE BEST GIFTS WE CAN GIVE OURSELVES IS TIME ALONE WITH GOD.

10

How do we become ONE

Manage Expectations

“An expectation is one person placing self-made obligations on the other person, without the other person's input, understanding, consent, or even knowing the obligations are there”.

Expectations can be :

- realistic,
- achievable or
- Unrealistic This is the problem – who defines what is realistic or not. One person's reality is the other persons illusion and essence.

Expectation

Outcome
Disappointment

11

Managing Expectations



expectation

A —————> B

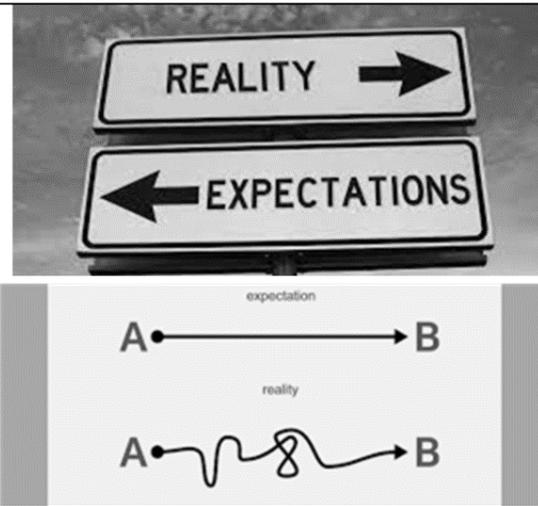
reality

A —~~~~~> B

12

Managing Expectations

Let's give examples of such expectations



13

Managing Expectations

Sample Expectations

1. You expect your spouse to look like / be like your friend, your mama, your dada,
2. You expect your spouse to apologize first.
3. You expect your spouse to do their share of the house chores.
4. You expect your spouse to have money for almost everything.
5. You expect your spouse to spend all their free time with you.
6. You expect your spouse to always know what you're thinking.
7. You expect your spouse to fill every void in your life at all times.
8. You expect to have a certain amount of sex on a regular basis.
9. You expect your spouse to accept me no matter what.

Are expectations the real happiness killer??

14

Managing Expectations



REALISTIC



ACHIEVEABLE

'Unrealistic expectations are planned bitterness.'

15

Managing Expectations

Communication

- **Talk about your expectations**
- Clarify it with your spouse
- Relook each others' expectations together in line with the scripture
- **Be open to compromises and common grounds, rework your expectations**
- Do not take each other for granted but bear with each other
- **Be committed to meeting your spouse reworked , realistic expectations**

16

How Do We Become One Talk, Chat, Have Fun Together

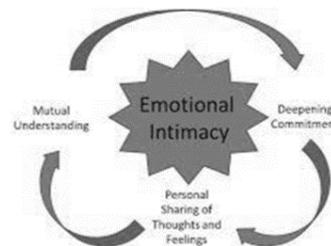
- Communication grows friendship
- Marriage grow stronger with friendship
- Who is your chatting partner??
- How do we grow communication with one's spouse



17

How Do We Become One Talk, Chat, Have Fun Together

Build Emotional Intimacy



“The lack of emotional intimacy can easily dry out a marriage and leave you with a roommate instead of a husband or wife”

18

How Do We Become One – Staying in Love

- Love must be kindled; it must be refueled continually. The good news is that with commitment, love can grow.
- Learn what love means to your spouse and be committed to meet your spouse's needs
- “For me, love is the most secure feeling. Love is having a companion, best friend, lover, partner, sounding board, cheerleader, advisor, and cuddle buddy through every avenue in the journey of life.”— Ash D.
- “The key to success in a healthy relationship with someone is actually the terrifying but necessary effort of commitment. Being there for someone is what a real relationship needs. When we neglect to put in the effort is when things don't work out with someone that could have been perfect for us. If you put in that extra effort for someone that can reciprocate it, love can be the greatest feeling one can ever feel.”— Adam B.

19

How Do We Become One – Staying in Love

What Does Love mean to a man

Vulnerability

Sex

Growing Together

Spouse support no matter what



What Does Love mean to a Woman

Security

Commitment

Care

20

How Do We Become One – Staying in Love

WHAT DOES LOVE MEAN TO YOU? TELL YOU SPOUSE

You must never assume that your spouse knows what you want. You must
TELL THEM, TELL THEM AND TELL THEM AGAIN.



21

How Do We Become One – Staying in Love

How can we continually keep love alive?

Put your comments in the chat box

22

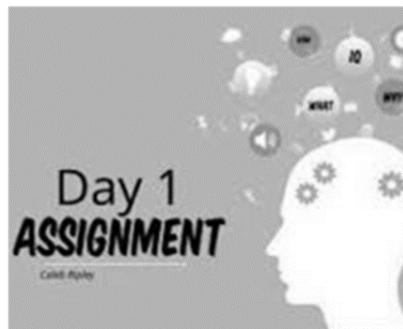
How Do We Become One – Staying in Love

Keeping love alive (Col 3: 12 – 13, II Cor 13: 4 – 8)

- Care for each other - You mean you did this for me?
- Play together - find the time
- Investing in your spouse emotional bank account
- Redo the courtship days
- Do laughable things – sense of humor

*Keeping
Love
Alive
After Baby Arrives*

23



Do something new or forgotten for / with your spouse

Ask your spouse what am not doing that you want me to begin to do

24

How Do We
Become One –
Defined R&R

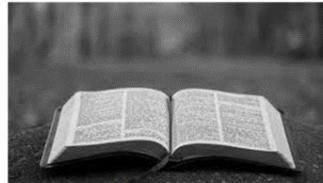
Roles and Responsibilities

Let's sample some opinion

Put in the chat box what roles are for men and
what roles are women Specific

25

Roles and Responsibilities

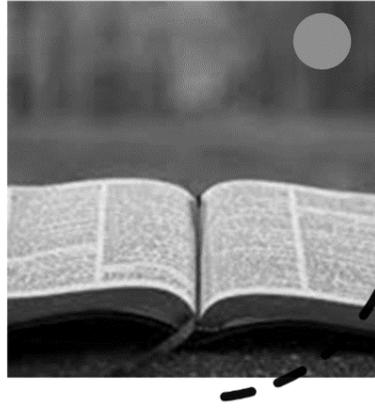


Family

26

Roles and Responsibilities

Love	Ephesians 5: 25 – 33, Col 3: 19
Submission	Ephesians 5: 21 -24, Col 3: 18
Respect	I Pet 3: 7



27

Applied Submission

- Overly assertive / bullies
- Battered into Submission
- Husband who won't lead



28

Applied Submission

- 2 Person Team
- Overall vision vs. Manages day- day activities
- Delegated Authority



29



Applied Submission

Submission does not mean you are a moron, or have no say in the home, it just means you accept your husband as your leader, and you willingly follow his directions

The will of the father was more important to Jesus than equality. Ask yourself is my equality or will more important than God's will for my marriage?

30

1

Roles and Responsibilities

Finances
Chores
Parenting
Projects
In-Laws

Family

31

Roles and Responsibilities

Finances - oneness
Chores - Partners
Parenting – co-parenting
Projects (Family (buy/build house)
, Personal e.g., freezer, chicken, goats,
office space, Wrangler)
In-Laws

Family

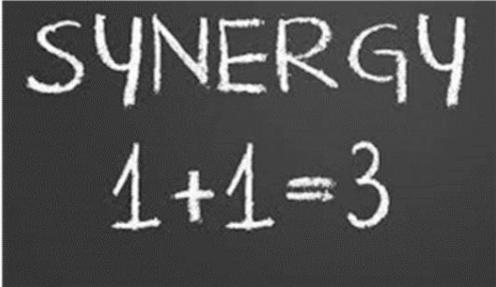
32

:

Roles and Responsibilities

Ecc1 4: 11 - 12

The Power of SYNERGY



33

Common Marital Issues

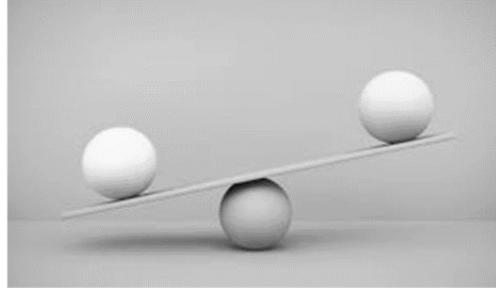


- Differences
 - Value Differences
 - Cultural Differences
- Unmet Needs
- Conflict resolution
- 3rd Party Influence
- Different parental styles (Isaac and Jacob)
- Spousal Abuse

34

Common
Marital
Issues:

Differences



Value Differences
Cultural Differences

Permit Idiocrasies

Your spouse does not need to lose their identity because he/she is married to you ☺

35

*Never question the power of one!
Throughout history it has been the
actions of only one person who has in
inspired the movement of change.*

—Steve Maraboli—

**One person
can only do
so much**

The Power of ONE

36

- Ho, my comrades! see the signal Waving in the sky!
Reinforcements now appearing, Victory is nigh!
- 'Hold the fort, for I am coming! 'Jesus signals still;
Wave the answer back to heaven, 'By Thy grace we will!'
- See the mighty host advancing, Satan leading on:
Mighty men around us falling, Courage almost gone!
- See the glorious banner waving! Hear the trumpet blow!
In our Leader's name we'll triumph Over every foe!
- Fierce and long the battle rages, But our help is near:
Onward comes our great Commander,
Cheer, my comrades, cheer!
- 'Hold the fort, for I am coming! 'Jesus signals still;
Wave the answer back to heaven, 'By Thy grace we will!'

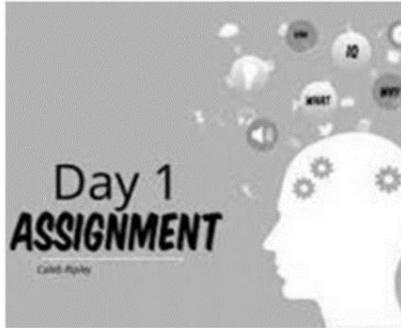


37

Marriage Can be
Beautiful



38



Do something new or forgotten for / with your spouse

Ask your spouse what am not doing that you want me to begin to do

39



Stories like mine

The Stories that touch the heart

40

Common Marital Issues

- Differences
 - Value Differences
 - Cultural Differences
- Unmet Needs
- Conflict resolution
- 3rd Party Influence
- Different parental styles (Isaac and Jacob)
- Spousal Abuse

41

Common Marital Issues – Unmet Needs

We all have needs, and unmet needs are the leading underlying factors behind most disputes and disappointments couples have, because they are needs and not wants.

- Sexual Fulfilment
- Affection
- Conversation
- Recreational Activities - Builds friendship
- Domestic Support
- Financial Support



42

Unmet Needs – Recreational Activities



**Be interested in your spouse
recreational Activities**

It builds friendship
You have things to talk about
You grow emotionally together

43

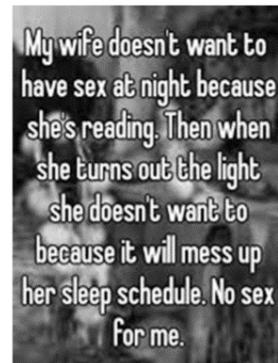
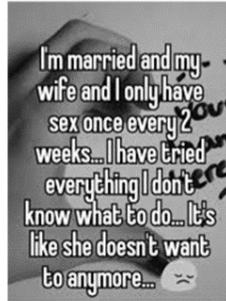
Unmet Needs - Conversation

**Your wife likes to
talk, if you don't
listen to her
someone else will**

**my wife says that I
never listen to her
(or something like that)**

44

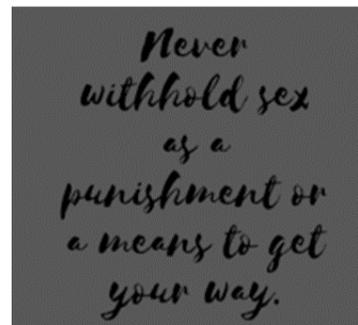
Unmet Needs - Sexual Fulfilment



45

Unmet Needs - Sexual Fulfilment

Do not deprive each other except perhaps 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 (1 Cor 7: 5).



46

Some Salient Principles

- Love is Patient
- Love is Kind
- Love does not keep record of wrong
- Bear with each other
- Have a large window of tolerance . Your spouse is not you. Give them time to make needed adjustments.



47

GOD IS THE WAY
TO MAKE
MARRIAGE WORK



**Be determined to listen to Him and
Follow Him
BUILD YOUR MARRIAGE ON HIM**

48

What are you going to begin to do differently from now on????

A Action
C Changes
T Things



49



50

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ABSTRACT

FOUNDATIONS FOR MARRIAGE FOR MEMBERS OF OASIS OF PEACE GLOBAL CHURCH MANITOBA, CANADA

Temitope Olufunmilola Omoniyi, DEdMin
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2021
Faculty Supervisor: Dr Jay Dee Owen

This project aims to empower members of the Oasis of Peace Global Church Manitoba in Canada to build the foundation for their marriage. Chapter 1 provides the historical and ministerial context for Oasis of Peace Global Church Canada and the objectives of this project. Chapter 2 exegetes four Scripture passages: Genesis 2:24-25 supports this thesis by showing that God instituted marriage and established the foundations and principles for a loving and enduring marriage. The exegesis of Ephesians 5:21-33 supports this argument by carefully distinguishing the roles of men and women in marriage. An exegesis of I Peter 3:1-7 supports this thesis by defining the level of authority in marriage. An exegesis of Malachi 2:14 supports this theory by asserting that marriage is a covenant relationship.

Chapter 3 describes practical and historical issues with marriage. Chapter 4 describes the implantation of the project, the content, and the teaching methodology of the specific course curriculum. Chapter 5 evaluates the project's purpose and goals. It also assesses the project's strengths and weaknesses, opportunities for future implementation.

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