



PREPARATION FOR

# MARRIAGE

CORNERSTONE  
CHURCH

EQUIPPING  
COURSES

## PREPARATION FOR MARRIAGE

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# Part One

## THE HIGH PRIORITY OF MARRIAGE

### WHY IS MARRIAGE SO IMPORTANT?

Marriage was ordained by God and was never intended to be lived without him. In fact, that's why it's called "Holy Matrimony". And so marriage is God's idea and because of that, he is committed to it and wants to bless it.

#### **Proverbs 18 : 22**

*He who finds a wife finds what is good and receives favour from the Lord.*

In the first three chapters of Genesis, it's recorded that God created male and female and it says, "God saw all that he had made, and it was very good" (Genesis 1:31). Interestingly, the creation of light was 'good', the creation of land and sea was 'good', and, likewise, the creation of vegetation, of fish and birds and animals was also 'good'. But not until he had created man and women did God call for our attention with "Behold, it was very good".

With so many "good" things in the Garden and on earth, only one thing was not good: "The Lord God said, 'it is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him'" (Genesis 2:18). In those few words God taught us that for man there is no substitute, no alternative plan, no better companion than his wife.

*"The void which originally was caused by taking 'bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh' can be filled only by the presence of women. Since a part of Adam went to make Eve, a man remains incomplete without his Eve." - Ed Wheat*

And That's in all areas: spiritually, emotionally, intellectually, and physically.

God created and designed marriage, and He didn't do it in a vacuum or in the dark. He gave us a detailed instruction manual describing how it is designed to work. If we are willing to follow His instructions, we will get the most out of our marriage. Always remember that a marriage is never static; it's always changing. And as such, your marriage will either grow or wither.

Everything God has designed for us is for our benefit, including marriage. Thus marriage was designed by God to give us the greatest human happiness possible. God never meant marriage to be endured, but to be enjoyed.

Marriage is like playing doubles in tennis: teaming up leads to success. You need to be partners instead of opponents. We trust that this course will prepare and help you to work as a team in your marriage. Remember, a team either wins or loses together!

## THE MARRIAGE COVENANT

When we enter into marriage, we enter into a covenant with each other. To “make covenant” literally means: “To cut”. Two people will cut a covenant with one another. And a blood covenant, which we see in the Old Testament, between two people was the closest, most enduring, most solemn and most sacred of all covenants on earth.

When a blood covenant was entered into, a contract was made whereby both parties covenanted to give life, love and protection forever until death parted them.

Three essential elements were involved when a covenant was cut:

1. **Blood** – both cut the wrists and held them together; or let their blood mingle in a cup and then both drank it.
2. **Promises** – both parties had to solemnly promise certain things.
3. **Seals or Signs** – were exchanged between the two parties. An example of this would be David and Jonathan in 1 Samuel 18.

Now when we enter into marriage, we likewise enter into a covenant. It's when a man and women give their lives to one another rather than simply sharing their lives with one another. And so when you make your vows to one another, you enter into a covenant relationship by what you believe in your heart and by what you confess with your mouth (It's what enabled us to enter into covenantal relationship with God – See Romans 10:9-10).

These vows/promises are witnessed by God and those present at the wedding ceremony. Rings are exchanged as a seal of your commitment one to another and as a sign that you are in covenant with one another. Blood is shed during the sex act to

consummate the marriage.

So before God, the couple have now become one flesh (Genesis 2:24; Matthew 19:5) and what God has joined together in covenant, let no man separate (Matthew 19:6).

Ecclesiastes 4:12 tells us, “*A cord of three strands is not quickly broken*”. In other words, a binding together of three persons – a man, a woman, and God is not easily broken or overcome. The principle that binds them inseparably together is covenant. As we incorporate Christ as a vital part of our marriage, he forms the third strand. And with him as an integral part, the marriage becomes stronger.

There are three successive phases in the outworking of a covenant relationship/marriage:

1. **A life is laid down.** Each lays down his life for the other. The husband looks at Christ's death on the cross and says: “That death was my death. When I came through the cross, I died. Now I am no longer living for myself”.  
The wife says the same. Each holds nothing back from the other. Everything the husband has is for the wife, and vice – versa. It's a merger more than a partnership.
2. **Out of that death comes a new life.** Each now lives out that new life in and through the other. “My life is in you; I am living out my life through you. You are the expression of what I am.”
3. **The covenant is consummated** by physical union which brings forth fruit. Without union there can be no fruit. Covenant leads to a shared life and fruitfulness. Life that is not shared remains sterile and fruitless.

If the marriage is approached with the attitude of “*what can I get, or what's in it for me?*” it is destined for failure. The one who approaches marriage as a covenant doesn't ask, “*What can I get?*” but rather asks, “*What can I give?*” And then goes on to answer the question, “*I give my life. I lay it down for you, and then I find my new life in you.*”



# THREE PRINCIPLES FOR SUCCESS

## Genesis 2 : 24

*For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and they shall become one flesh.*

Immediately after God created Eve, he gave these basic instructions on marriage. In this verse we see three principles basic to any successful marriage: (1) leaving, (2) cleaving, and (3) becoming one flesh.

### The commitment to leave

Leaving is a physical act, but it is also an attitude. Many people enter marriage ready to run home to mother at the first crisis; they have difficulty cutting the emotional 'apron strings'. We are never to stop honouring our parents, but we are to leave them.

The word "leave" means to untie or unbind. You have to loosen the cords which tie you to your parents and then tie yourself to each other. It's a separation from one and a binding together of the other.

The principle of leaving involves refocusing our lives on each other - looking to each other to meet our emotional needs and not to others, be they parents or friends. It also involves giving other relationships and things a lesser priority than our relationship with our spouse.

You need to consider if there are any areas in your life that you still need to leave - an area you need to give lower priority than your relationship with your future spouse? It could be your job, hobbies, friends or even television. Are you too involved in community service activities? Perhaps keeping a neat home is too important to you. Children can also often be designated a higher priority than the spouse.

### The commitment to cleave

The man is the one who is responsible for holding the marriage together by "cleaving" to his wife. Cleaveing in this sense means to be welded inseparably, so that each

becomes a part of the other. The principle of “cleaving” is one of commitment and permanence. To cast in concrete is to permanently cleave.

When you make a commitment to stick together – divorce is not an option!

You’ll have daily opportunities to apply the Cleave Principle. The daily pressures of life, the hard times as well as the good times, can help to cement relationships together. The key is to pull together instead of pulling apart.

## **The commitment to oneness**

Not only are we to leave and to cleave, but we are to become one flesh – growing in intimacy in all areas, enjoying one another completely. In God’s sight, marriage means to become one – one in mind (agreement), one in body (sexual intimacy), and one in spirit (united in faith; serving Jesus together). This is one reason why divorce is so devastating: the result is not two people going their separate ways, but two parts of one. What a fragmented life and picture of incompleteness! You need to choose to be your spouse’s completer.

Oneness means that the husband and wife are on the same team. If we lose the game, both lose. There can be no winner unless both win. Any help we offer our spouses helps our team. Any pain, hurt, insult, any lack of support or faithfulness, any failure to help our spouses reflects back on the team

The goal of marriage is to be a winning team. This involves both partners’ willingness to share the load and to build a partnership.

We can be the most reinforcing human agent in our spouse’s lives and they in ours if we are willing to follow these three principles of leaving, cleaving, and becoming one flesh.



# Part Two

## REALISING OUR ROLES

In Part Two we want to answer the question, “Do husbands and wives play different roles in the marriage”?

Joel Stembridge wrote the following poem entitled, “The Connection”

*Long, long ago, as you may know,  
It was most often said  
That in all homes which were well run  
The husband was the head.*

*Since ancient times there have been rhymes  
And views about which spouse  
Would occupy the place of head  
In any well run house.*

*It seemed to me that there could be  
Full freedom from this strife  
If one's position was made clear  
Concerning man and wife.*

*So wife and I thought we would try  
To save our home from wreck.  
She said, “of course, you be the head;  
I'll only be the neck.”*

*And now I see the loyalty  
And wisdom of her plan,  
And confidently recommend  
The same to every man.*

*But I request you make this test;  
Learn what you may expect;  
Just try to move your head without  
Permission from your neck!*

This couple had worked out their *roles*, but they were confused about their *positions*. Too many times the husband and wife are neck and neck in a race to see who is going to be the head!

## MANY MISCONCEPTIONS

Today there are many views and misconceptions of marriage. Some picture the husband's role as a bureaucratic ruler who never makes a mistake (or at least won't admit that he has) and continually reminds those around him, *"I'm the boss in my house. When I tell my wife to jump, she not only jumps but she asks, 'how high'".* On the other extreme is pictured the husband who is simply a pawn, weak and spineless, whose wife leads him by the nose and directs his life.

Both views are warped!

And what about the wife? Is she to be a *"Yes, dear," "Whatever you say, dear,"* pawn? There to serve with no interest and personality of her own? Of course not! But the other extreme is just as ridiculous. Picture the wife who is not much more than a roommate, pursuing her own things whether it's to climb the corporate ladder or to beat the best tennis player. Whatever her interests are, she is more concerned about developing her own individuality than in being a wife, and anything that hinders her – including her man – better watch out!

In this day of individuality you can find almost any kind of marriage; however, most of these self-designed arrangements just don't work. Where can we go to find a workable arrangement?

## BIBLICAL ROLES IN MARRIAGE

In Part One, we said that in order to come to the right solution or conclusion, we must start with the right premise. We need to go back to the first marriage manual. God's order for husbands and wives works because he's the One who created marriage in the first place!

Before we can look at the different roles a husband and wife play in a marriage, we need to first establish the following:

1. **The husband and wife stand equal** in the sight of God, and yet have been given different roles and functions in the family unit. *“So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, for all of you who were baptised into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, **nor is there male and female**, for you are all one in Christ Jesus”* (Galatians 3:26-28).
2. **God designated the man as head of the family** when he said to Eve: *“Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you”* (Genesis 3:16). This same principle is reaffirmed in the New Testament: *“Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Saviour”* (Ephesians 5:22-23). Society did not assign the position of leadership to man; he was divinely appointed as the head of the family.

The truth is, any group needs a head, or sheer anarchy will result. A head is also needed in marriage and God has delegated this role to the husband.

But he is not to be a bureaucratic leader; instead, he is to demonstrate the same attitude Christ demonstrated. Jesus was willing to give up His life for the Church (Ephesians 5:25); husband, are you willing to make that kind of sacrifice for your wife? As you give her leadership, do you exhibit the same depth of love for her that you have for yourself? (Ephesians 5: 28).

So, God's order for the home is that the husband be the head of the wife, as Christ is the head of man.

### **1 Corinthians 11 : 3**

*Now I want you to realise that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God.*

God the Father designed, for our benefit, this order of authority which can be described as *“God's umbrella of protection”*. God's order is as follows:

God the Father - Christ - Man - Woman - Children

God uses this order of authority in the human race to protect and provide us with maximum happiness.

The wife, operating under God's prescribed umbrella of protection for her, assumes her role of supporting and encouraging her husband and caring for her home and children. She also has the freedom to participate in various activities that do not conflict with her role as wife and mother.

The husband's sphere of responsibility under God's umbrella of protection includes his leadership in the home as well as his responsibilities in business and society.

As the wife responds to her husband's leadership, she enjoys protection and fulfillment in the position that God designed for her. She does not assume pressures and problems that she is not designed to carry; and should she leave her position of responder and get between her husband and God in a position of leadership; the fulfillment provided for both of them is stifled.

In responding to her husband, a wife must remember that the husband-wife relationship is an earthly picture of the relationship between Christ and the Church. Just as the church is totally dependent on Christ, so the wife is to be dependent on her husband; protected and fulfilled in God's divine order.

Some people think marriage is a 50-50 affair, but it is not. It requires 100% from each partner. Each partner has a role that demands his or her all. Each role is equal in importance to the other but carries with it different responses and responsibilities. The fact that the roles are different does not mean that one is inferior to the other. Each role is judged in terms of its function and cannot operate effectively without the other. A husband and wife complement each other in much the same way as a lock and key go together.

## The role of the husband

### 1. To love his wife sacrificially.

#### Ephesians 5 : 25 - 33

*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..*

### 2. To be considerate and respectful towards his wife.

#### 1 Peter 3 : 7

*Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers.*

### 3. To be polite and gentle.

#### Colossians 3 : 19

*Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them.*

### 4. To be the spiritual leader of the family.

#### 1 Timothy 3 : 4

*He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect.*

As head of the family, it is the husband's responsibility to organise and supervise family devotions, and to set the tone for the spiritual and moral stability of the family.

### 5. To steward responsibly.

God has given the husband the responsibility to guide (direct), to guard (protect), and to govern (correct).



## **6. To be understanding and sensitive to her and to her needs.**

### **1 Peter 3 : 7**

*Husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way...*

As the husband incorporates these qualities into his marriage, he can then fulfill his job: to give leadership with love. There is no place in God's order for a husband who is a bully or a pawn.

In decision making, God says that it's the husband's responsibility, after much discussion, to make the final decision. He will be held responsible for the final outcome. Headship is a 'weighty' thing.

## **The role of the wife**

### **1. To be a helpmate and encourager.**

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

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

A helpmate and encourager isn't to be a maid and a 'yes sir' woman, but neither is she to be such an individualist that she only considers her life and ambitions. In the above verse, we see that she is to be a helper who is suited for her husband. She is to be his completer and is to stand alongside him and be his encourager.

God can and will use her to nurture her husband intellectually, emotionally and spiritually, if she is willing. Simply put, a wife is to be the same kind of helper to her husband that God is to his bride, the Church!

### **2. To respect her husband.**

#### **Ephesians 5 : 33**

*However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband."*

A loving leader and a faithful follower should live in an atmosphere of mutual respect (Ephesians 5:21 “*Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ*”).

### **3. To be willing to follow her husband and her husband’s leadership.**

#### **1 Peter 3 : 5 - 6**

*For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to make themselves beautiful. They were submissive to their own husbands, like Sarah, who obeyed Abraham and called him her master.*

### **4. To have a submissive attitude.**

#### **Ephesians 5 : 22**

*Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord... so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.*

People often get angry at the word “submission”. We, however, believe that true liberation for married women comes from fitting in with God’s plan and his order for marriage. Submission in marriage is the wife’s willingness to support her home team and let her husband be the captain. They are equally valuable players; the husband is not more valuable or more important, but functionally he is captain of the team. The wife is to be committed to him, to co-operate with him, to support him, and to encourage him, realising that unless they work together they will both lose the game!

### **5. To have a gentle and quiet spirit.**

#### **1 Peter 3 : 3 - 4**

*Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as braided hair and the wearing of gold jewelry and fine clothes. Instead, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God’s sight.*

### **6. To be committed, dedicated and loving.**

#### **Titus 2 : 4 - 5**

*Then they (older women) can train the younger women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind,*

*and to be subject to their husbands, so that no one will malign the word of God.*

### **Philippians 2 : 3**

*Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves.*

There is no place in marriage for competition. Competing is the opposite of submitting. Mutually submitting is mutually yielding to one another. Suppose the husband wants to go to rugby and the wife to the opera. Just because the husband is the leader doesn't mean the opera is out and the rugby is in – not if they are following the directives in Philippians 2.

When marriage partners mutually respect each other, it is easy to see that they are on the same team. You don't hear them putting each other down. They have a foundation of mutual respect and they are courteous and kind to one another. Their home has an atmosphere of love and acceptance – there's no battleground there! They play their positions well, and it is obvious they are winning.

# Part Three

## UNDERSTANDING EACH OTHER

For us to truly understand each other, we need to realise that men and women are very different; not only in appearance but in personality and temperament. Unless we understand these differences, we'll never find true unity in the midst of such diversity. What so often happens though is spouses attempt to change one another; to get their partner to be like them, think like them, and act like them. If God wanted that, he would have made us all to be the same. Differences are to be appreciated; but equally understood!

Let's consider two ways that people differ:

1. Our basic approach to life - more facts-oriented or feelings-oriented?
2. Our unique temperaments - more introverted or extroverted?

## 1. OUR BASIC APPROACH TO LIFE

More facts-oriented or feelings-oriented?

### Feelings-oriented person

People who approach life from a feelings orientation are ones who, when they speak, tend to express their feelings and emotions. For example, perhaps the husband likes an open atmosphere in his marriage, and if tension is present in the relationship he strives to clear the air. His desire is to work through conflict and "not to let the sun go down on his anger." It is important for him to have feedback from his wife. This makes him a more relationship-oriented than a facts-oriented person.

### Facts-oriented person

This kind of person approaches life from a more cognitive orientation. For example, a facts-oriented husband speaks to express ideas and to communicate information more than to express his feelings and emotions. He would rather not face unpleasant feelings and even becomes uncomfortable when emotional subjects are brought up.

He prefers a peaceful co-existence rather than being confronted with emotions. He has a theoretical mind and is more goal-oriented than people-oriented. He tends to think in general ideas and is comfortable with subjects like his job, sports and current events.

### **Let's look at a scenario:**

Tebogo is a high profile executive at a computer company. He is very competent, successful, and a good provider for his family. He is comfortable in a world of facts and figures where emotional matters do not play a significant role; but he is less secure at home.

"I wanted to be a success and make a lot of money and the way you do that is to spend a lot of time at work and a small amount of time at home. Besides, the less time I spent at home, the less I had to get involved. My wife wants to have these emotional confrontations. She wants to talk about her feelings and fears and that makes me uncomfortable, so the result is I spend more time at work."

Let's look at things from his wife's perspective. Lerato wants to share her feelings, concerns, and desires with her husband and to work through each frustration with him. "Tebogo is a success in his profession," she says, "but at home not only does he not meet my needs, he doesn't even understand them." She interprets his lack of feelings as rejection.

Consequently, they are far from benefiting from each other's differences. They are not playing on the same team!

## **What we are not saying**

### **1. That being one is better than the other.**

A feelings-oriented person is not less intelligent, nor does a facts-oriented person have fewer feelings. Both approaches have strengths and weaknesses, advantages and disadvantages. Which side you or your spouse tend to be on the most is less important than understanding where you are and that people are different.

### **2. We are not saying that men are cognitive and women are emotional.**

In some relationships the men are more sentimental and romantic and the woman is the organiser.

### 3. We are not saying that everyone is either feelings-oriented or facts-oriented.

It is not so important whether we are alike or different in our approach to life or a special situation. But it is helpful to recognise which approach we are coming from.

## 2. OUR UNIQUE TEMPERAMENTS

More introverted or extroverted?

Not only are there basic differences in the area of feelings and facts, but we each have a special temperament. Often “opposites” attract. However, those very characteristics that attracted you to each other may later be an irritation as these affect the efficiency of running a household.

It normally works that your strengths are your partner’s weaknesses and your weaknesses are your partner’s strengths. The challenge to you is: can you allow your spouse to operate in their areas of strengths and not be threatened by their abilities in those areas? By doing that, you have the potential for being a terrific team together.

### Four basic temperaments

The temperament theory was first conceived by Hippocrates more than twenty-four hundred years ago. It divides people into four basic categories.

**Extroverts** are usually **sanguine** (confident – cheerfully optimistic) or **choleric** (easily angered – often angry or irritated) in temperament, while **introverts** are predominantly **melancholic** (thoughtful sadness – an atmosphere of gloom) or **phlegmatic** (unexcitable – not easily excited or agitated).

Generally, each of us is a combination of two or more of the temperaments, with one being dominant. Each temperament has its own set of strengths and weaknesses. By understanding our own temperament and that of our spouse, we are better equipped

to reach our potential in understanding each other. Understanding our strengths and weaknesses helps us work together as a team.

We should never use the weaknesses of our temperament type to excuse ourselves. Have you heard someone say, *“Laziness is part of my personality – that’s just the way I am”*? We can study our temperaments to better understand how we respond to our surroundings, but we should never use them as an excuse for not working on an area of life that needs improvement!

If we are going to truly understand each other and appreciate our differences, then we need to become aware of *each other’s needs* and know how to *meet those needs*. A husband’s and wife’s needs are very different; therefore don’t try and give your spouse what you need. Most breakdowns in a marriage occur as a result of these basic needs not being met.

## HER NEEDS

### 1. Affection

Your wife needs your affection. For men affection is synonymous with sex, but not for her. Affection for her is touching, holding (in a non-sexual way), hugs, cards, flowers, dinners out, opening the car door, walks together etc. What it says is, *“I love you and care deeply for you.”* She needs to know that; she needs that affirmation!

Most wives feel starved for affection; because for them affection symbolises security, protection, comfort and approval. Affection for her is the “cement” that holds the relationship together.

It’s been said that most affairs occur because of a lack of affection (for the wife) and lack of sex (for the husband). And so it’s a vicious cycle – she doesn’t get enough affection, so she shuts him off sexually. He doesn’t get enough sex, so the last thing he feels like being is affectionate! When her need for affection is met, she will be more willing to meet his need for sex. She needs affection before sex will mean much to her.

Affection is the environment of the marriage while sex is the event.

## 2. Conversation

She needs you to talk to her and then to really listen to her. For her this is an emotional need that needs to be met.

Men do not seem to have as great a need for conversation with their wives as women do with their husbands. And the reason men did it when they were dating is usually because they wanted to make a good impression. Men know women like it so they do it. What's changed?

And when she says, *"Let's talk"* don't say, *"What would you like to talk about?"* That's like you saying to her, *"Let's make love"* and she says, *"Why, are we ready to have children?"*

## 3. Honesty and Openness

She needs to trust you completely! For her to feel secure, she must trust you to give her accurate information about your past, the present and the future. Secrecy is the last thing she needs or wants!

So be honest and completely open with her about everything. She has a right to your innermost thoughts and feelings; even at the risk of hurting her! Don't lie to her (even if trying to protect her), don't cover things up, don't flatter her, and don't give her a reason to ever doubt you or your word. Broken trust is hard to restore.

## 4. Financial Support

She needs you to support her financially. In other words, she needs enough money to live comfortably. So, did she marry you for your money? Yes; in that she wants her husband to earn enough money to support her as well as (or better than) her father did when she was growing up. Where a husband fails in this regard it places incredible strain on the marriage. Of course, we're not talking about sustaining an unnecessary high standard of living, but rather meeting the necessities of life. Remember, the higher the standard, the greater the pressure.

Financially, our wives want to feel supported and cared for!



## **5. Family Commitment**

She needs you to be a good father and one who leads the family. The family unit is a strong need in her and therefore she needs you to take the leadership role in the family and to commit to the moral and educational development of the children. She wants a husband whom she can look up to and respect, and then to have her children grow up to be like their father.

When husbands avoid fulfilling their role as father, by turning all the parenting over to the wife, they lose their wife's respect! The best husband is a good father and good leader in the home.

## **HIS NEEDS**

### **1. Sexual Fulfillment**

Your husband needs you to make love to him. God invented sex and as such it is holy, lovely and beautiful in the context of marriage. God intends that a husband and wife enjoy sexual intimacy for their lifetime together.

Sex is linked to a man's sense of self worth, success and ego. A man needs sex! This is your husband's first, most important, and essential need. It is as great as your need for affection.

### **2. Recreational Companionship**

Your husband needs you to be his "playmate". Find common and enjoyable areas of interest, and then do them together. If you don't meet this need in his life, someone else will.

### **3. Attractive Spouse**

Your husband needs you to take care of yourself and to look good for him. Most men find it nearly impossible to appreciate a woman for her inner qualities alone, he needs more! He needs an attractive spouse (not necessarily a model – although he probably wouldn't say "no" to that).

#### **4. Domestic Support**

Your husband needs peace and quiet in the home. For him, he is in a war zone every day and needs a safe harbour to come to at the end of the day. Home needs to be a place of respite from the hostile world of business. He doesn't want to walk into a "war zone" at home or come home to mess and chaos. Give him some time to relax and unwind before telling him the dramas of the day.

#### **5. Admiration**

Your husband needs you to be proud of him. He needs to know you are his greatest ally and support. The world may judge him, betray him, and misunderstand him; but he needs you to believe in him, approve of him, and be loyal towards him. He can face anything if he knows you believe in him and will always stand with him. This motivates him to greatness.



# Part Four

## GREAT EXPECTATIONS

What expectations are you taking into your marriage? Do you think they will be met?

If you aim for nothing you will hit nothing. It's important to know and understand what each of you wants in (and out of) your marriage. If we are going to meet and fulfill each other's expectations, we need to know what they are. However, we need to ensure that our expectations of one another are realistic; otherwise we'll always be falling short of the mark.

*"The most common cause of marriage problems is that partners' needs are in conflict, but they can't discuss the conflict because they don't know one exists. They only know they are miserable."*

- Dr Selma Miller, president of the Association of Marriage and Family Counselors in the U.S.A.

## AN EXAMPLE

Let's meet Mark and Paula...

Mark grew up as a very self-sufficient only child. He had always been able to entertain himself and especially enjoyed his hobby - sports cars. He never had many deep friendships - that was until he met Paula. After a brief courtship, they married and began their life together.

Paula was from a large, close-knit family, and she desired that her relationship with Mark would always be close. During the first years of marriage she resented his weekly night out with the boys. It seemed Mark's time was always filled with his own activities, especially rebuilding sports cars. How she wished he would spend more of his time with her and that they could have some hobbies together!

Children came and Mark, for the most part, left it up to Paula to rear them. She often complained and couldn't understand why Mark was not more involved with his own family. Mark didn't understand why Paula wasn't happy; wasn't he a good provider for

her? Why did she continually nag him about his private life and activities?

Paula desired a more intimate relationship with Mark, who wanted a life of his own apart from the marriage relationship. Both Mark and Paula need to identify their *expectations of marriage*. Only then will they be able to work a compromise.

## Involvement – how much?

Do you approach marriage more from Paula's perspective or Mark's? How much involvement do you desire to have with your spouse / future spouse? How much intimacy, closeness, and the deep sharing of life's experiences do you want with your spouse / future spouse?

Sharing life deeply with one another and being loved, trusted, and appreciated, especially when the other understands our weaknesses, gives a sense of identity and self-confidence.

There are different degrees of involvement between marriage partners:

### Minimum involvement

In a minimum involvement marriage, the lives of the husband and wife overlap very little. They go in different directions and meet only occasionally. They have separate interests and hobbies and are usually quite independent of each other. The wife is not irritated or bothered if the husband is often away on business. He is not really missed!

### Maximum involvement

In a maximum involvement marriage the lives of the spouses are very involved with each other. They make most of their decisions together and share deeply with each other their dreams and thoughts.

If you are in a *maximum involvement* marriage, it's easy to question friends who have *minimum involvement* marriages. If *both partners* agree about the amount of

involvement desired with the other, then we should not consider their marriage unsuccessful.

## Moderate involvement

A moderate involvement marriage is, naturally, in the middle.

All three marriage styles can be successful. The key is that *both partners* are satisfied and agree on the amount of involvement with each other in their marriage. Problems develop when the involvement expectations of the husband and that of the wife are not the same.

## Areas of expectations

It is important that we identify and decide on the degree of involvement we want, but we also need to look at other areas of expectations in marriage. It's hard enough to meet expectations when we know what they are, but it is almost impossible when we don't know what our spouse expects.

And so, what are your expectations? Why do you want to get married? What is most important to you and your spouse/future spouse? It's vital that you talk these things through!

## Some expectations/conditions for a successful marriage:

1. Forget about having a perfect marriage and get on with building a good marriage.
2. Be willing to give 100% to each other; as opposed to a 50-50 deal.
3. Enter into the marriage knowing it's for keeps; divorce can never be an option.
4. Be realistic in your expectations. If they're too high, lower them.
5. Be willing to sow good habits into the marriage; remembering "*a man reaps what he sows*". (Gal 6:7)

## BUILDING EACH OTHER UP

To tear down your spouse is one of the cruelest and unloving things you can do; it spells defeat for your relationship.

It has been estimated that it takes four positive statements to offset one negative statement. Too often in marriage, the ratio of positive statements to negative statements is one to four, not four to one. How do you plan to rate in your marriage?

Your spouse will definitely need you to build them up. If you don't, who will? Their boss? Don't count on it. The children one day? How many children walk in and say, *"Mom and Dad, I want to express my appreciation to you for your constant discipline and for not letting me do certain things I want to because you know they are not in my best interest."* Will our friends build us up? If we're fortunate they might, but we can't count on it. Our spouses/partners need our encouragement! You can be the positive reinforcing agent in your partner's life if you choose building up instead of tearing down.

Here are three suggestions for building up your partner:

### 1. Concentrate on each other's strengths.

Often in marriage, we have a tendency to concentrate on our partner's faults and on his or her weak areas. The reality is we all have strengths and weaknesses. Strengths and weaknesses assure us neither of success nor of failure in marriage. They are merely the setting or the field where the game of marriage will be played. Always try to allow your partner to operate in their area of strength. When we choose not to be threatened by our partner's strengths, even in areas where we are weak, we learn from each other.

Every day we make choices to build up or tear down. Choose well!

### 2. Build self-esteem in your spouse.

There are basically three elements in building self-esteem. If any one of the three is missing, then how we view ourselves will be affected.

- **Sense of worth:** knowing we are of value and are appreciated by others. We need to find ways to say to our partners, “*You are of great value to me and I appreciate you!*” A message or phone call affirming your commitment to and belief in your partner can alter his or her day.
- **Sense of belonging:** feeling a part of our world; knowing that we are loved and needed, that we’re on a team. Your partner needs to know that. Tell him/her so!
- **Sense of competence:** having the ability to do something well; having confidence in our abilities. Be willing to encourage each other in this.

Encouraging your partner is an investment; as your partner develops confidence and competence, you will receive the dividends.

### 3. Learn to be a praiser.

“Praise” comes from the Latin word that means “worth”. Webster’s defines praise as “*to commend the worth of; to glorify God; commendation.*”

Some other definitions could be:

- **Praise is describing what you appreciate about your partner.**
- **Praise is affirming what your partner is becoming.** Goethe said: “*If you treat a man as he is, he will stay as he is. If you treat him as if he were what he ought to be and could be, he will become that bigger and better man.*”
- **Praise is sincere.** Flattery is not praise. Flattery is insincere and makes the recipient uncomfortable. Flattery is counterfeit praise.
- **Praise is verbal.** We can have all kinds of nice thoughts about our partner’s, but only when they are verbalised is power released.

In praising one another:

- Be specific.
- Describe, don’t evaluate.
- Be sincere; avoid exaggerations.
- Don’t overlook written praise.
- Give a gift for no reason at all.
- Praise often.





# Part Five

## COMMUNICATION AND RESOLVING CONFLICT

An experiment was once conducted to determine the amount of conversation that takes place between the average husband and wife in a normal week. The participants wore portable electronic microphones that measured every word spoken from *'Pass the butter'* to *'Hi, I'm home. What's for dinner?'*

How much time would you guess the average couple spent talking to (or at) each other? An hour a day? No, not even seven hours a week; not even one hour, or thirty minutes. Would you believe the average communication time was seventeen minutes a week?

What has happened to communication in the average marriage today? We don't plan to stop communicating with each other. What is it that makes people stop talking to the one person with whom they have chosen to spend the rest of their lives with?

To communicate with meaning and depth is an art to learn and a skill to develop. It won't just happen automatically.

It's been said that 90% of all marriage counseling involves the attempt to restore communication, or to teach the couple to communicate effectively for the first time. No team can survive without communication. Poor communication, or a breakdown of clear communication, brings misunderstanding, hurt and division!

The *foundation* for effective communication is transparency and openness. The *goal* of communication is oneness and unity; to understand your partner. The *principle* of communication is to *"speak the truth in love"* (Ephesians 4:15).

*"Speak"* - there must be communication between husband and wife.

*"The truth"* - be as objective as you can. Stick to the issues at hand.

*"In love"* - never speak truth in anger, in bitterness, or with hostility.

The key to good communication begins with the *desire* to communicate. People often speak to express their own desires and to justify themselves, not really listening to the other person. In business, ignoring good communication can spell disaster and

financial failure. In international affairs it can lead to war.

In marriage, poor communication leads to frustration, misunderstandings, alienation and even divorce. When we talk about communication in marriage we are not talking about an optional extra; we are talking about its very breath of life.

## WHAT IS COMMUNICATION?

Webster's defines communication as, *"to impart, to transmit, to give information; to have meaningful relationship."* In other words, communication exists when another person hears what you said and understands what you meant by what you said. Merely saying the words doesn't mean we've really communicated at all!

Communication is made up of **verbal** and **non-verbal** communication.

**Verbal** (the actual words spoken) only makes up 7% of the total message.

Our **non-verbal** communication accounts for the balance, made up of inflection (changing pitch) and tone (38%) and facial expressions (55%). This includes things such as shrugs, stares, and glares. Have you ever said "OK" when it really wasn't OK? Your tone of voice can completely reverse the message. There is nothing worse than being with a couple who are saying the right words, while underneath is bitterness, hostility, and a totally different message!

### Levels of communication

**Level 1: Small talk** – Clichés, greetings etc. Indifferent and non-engaging.

**Level 2: Reporting facts** – Here information is shared but there are no personal comments with it. Very impersonal!

**Level 3: Ideas and opinions** – Intimacy begins here, for on this level you risk exposing your own thoughts, feelings and opinions.

**Level 4: Feelings and emotions** – Communication at this level describes what is going on inside you – how you feel about your partner or the situation. There is now a depth

and vulnerability in your communication.

**Level 5: Deep insight** – This is where there is a sharing of ourselves with each other. Rare insightful moments will occur when you are perfectly in tune with one another in understanding, depth and emotional satisfaction.

A relationship is only as deep as its communication level. Unless we can share our real feelings with each other – our hurts, fears, dreams, and inner longings – our communication will remain on a surface level. In marriage with only surface communication, the husband and wife are little more than roommates, two people living under one roof with no deep relationship or shared hopes and dreams.

## The lost art of listening

Most of us prefer to talk rather than listen; but poor listening is often the root of many marital communication problems. It is estimated that most people hear only 20% of what is said to them. How do you think you rate in the area of listening? Are you too busy thinking of what you are going to say next to hear what your spouse is saying to you?

### Here are three suggestions to raise our listening score:

1. One cannot listen intently unless one's mouth is shut!
2. Listening effectively means that when someone is talking, you are not thinking about what you are going to say when the other person stops talking.
3. Listening is more than politely waiting for your turn to speak.

### James 1 : 19 - 20

<sup>19</sup> *Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry,*

<sup>20</sup> *for man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires.*

“...to listen is an act of the will – it's the greatest act of love one person can give to another.”

- Edwin Cole

# BARRIERS TO COMMUNICATION

The three most common barriers to communication are:

1. **Explosion** – An angry explosion is the worst form of communication.
2. **Tears** – A method of self-defense used predominantly by women.
3. **Silence** – Sulking or the slow burn of anger.

# PRINCIPLES FOR EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

1. Commit yourself to becoming increasingly transparent.
2. Seek not so much to be understood as to understand.
3. Develop a pleasant tone of voice.
4. Adopt an accommodating and receptive posture.
5. Be courteous and respectful.
6. Learn the powerful art of timing.
7. Make eye contact.
8. Make sure you have all the facts.
9. Be clear and specific.
10. Be positive in your speech.
11. Be sensitive to each other's needs and feelings.
12. Leave old bones buried (don't bring up the past).
13. Avoid negative references to his father/her mother.
14. Attack the issue, not the person.
15. Avoid sarcasm.
16. Honour your spouse as a lifestyle and communicating will be easy.

The acronym “*THINK*” is a good reminder when it comes to communicating.  
Before you speak – **THINK...**

- Is it True?
- Is it Helpful?
- Is it Inspiring?
- Is it Necessary?
- Is it Kind?

I think this will prevent a whole lot of unnecessary speaking and unhelpful communication.

You want the **BEST** for your marriage in the way you communicate:

- Bless with your words.
- Edify with what you say.
- Share openly and honestly.
- Touch affectionately while you talk.

You want to communicate the “BEST” to your spouse!

## RESOLVING CONFLICT

Unresolved conflict does not go away. It may be covered for a while, but eventually it pokes up its ugly head.

It starts with a *difference of opinion* (“spat”) leading to **confrontation**. If not resolved, it progresses to a *heated debate* (“quarrel”) leading to **division**. If not resolved here, it progresses to *intense physical anger* (“fight”) leading to **rejection**. If still not resolved, it progresses to where *the hostility is confirmed* (“war”) leading to **separation**.

Unresolved conflict grows and grows, progressing through the above steps until the end result is reached and separation occurs. For a successful marriage you need to be willing to do whatever it takes to resolve conflict. It is not always easy or convenient, and it can be tiring and discouraging but it is vital to work at resolving conflict.

It’s impossible for people from two separate backgrounds (complete with differing goals, viewpoints and points of reference) to agree on everything. You *will* have conflict in your marriage!

Conflict in itself is neither good nor bad, right nor wrong. Conflict simply is! It is how we respond to conflict that is most important.

The question then is, “How can we respond in the right way; how can we resolve conflict?” We are not advocating unreserved expression of all our feelings. This

leads to open warfare and many verbal battles in which there are no winners, only casualties! On the other hand, when we ignore conflict the results can be resentment, bitterness, and suppressed anger.

The goal must be to resolve conflict and maintain the relationship. If we are willing to work through our wrong responses and attitudes, our relationship can be strengthened and built in the midst of our differences.

## Ways to handle conflict

- 1. The dominant/subservient method:** This occurs when one person assumes a passive role while the other lays down the law and will accept nothing else. This method does not deal with conflict correctly as it reduces the value of the subservient partner.
- 2. To draw apart:** When conflict occurs the couple withdraw from each other and only come together when there is a need to – be it a social engagement, for sex, or other activities that require they be together.
- 3. The resolution method:** This method involves facing up to the conflict and working out a solution.

Resolving conflict involves a willingness to be open with each other and to communicate our real feelings. It involves both partners being willing to yield to each other at times, or to come to a compromise in which each is willing to give a little. It involves committing the time it will take to work through differences to the point where both people are satisfied with the end result.

Being willing to work through a conflict builds the relationship without sacrificing individual goals.

## Steps to resolving conflict

### Step 1: Define the problem.

First, we must admit there is a conflict. Write down what it is you are trying to resolve.

**Step 2: Identify who has the need for a solution and the other's contribution to the problem.**

Write it down.

**Step 3: Suggest alternate solutions.**

Make a list.

**Step 4: Select a plan of action.**

This is a simple problem-solving method. It helps you focus on the problem you are trying to resolve, not on each other.





# Part Six

## ESTABLISHING A CREATIVE LOVE LIFE

### God's view of sex

Genesis 2:24-25 “For this reason (reason of marriage) a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh. The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.”

Here God put his stamp of approval on the sexual union in marriage. He not only approves of it; he invented it! It's to be an expression of love between husband and wife.

Certainly God intended sex for procreation, but just as certainly he also intended sex for pleasure for both husband and wife. Only the man needs to reach orgasm in order for the couple to have children, but God also created woman with the capability of receiving much pleasure from the sexual union.

The Bible discusses sex openly and matter-of-factly, acknowledging that it is a precious gift from God (Proverbs 5:18-19; Song of Songs 4:10-12). A large portion of Song of Songs is about relationships and sex. If you have any ideas that God does not approve of sex or that sex isn't intended to be exciting and exhilarating, it's time to change your pattern of thinking.

Harry Hollis, Jr. wrote this poem entitled, **“Thank God for Sex”**

*Lord, it's hard to know what sex really is -  
Is it some demon put here to torment me?  
Or some delicious seducer from reality?  
It is neither of these, Lord.*

*I know what sex is -  
It is body and spirit,  
It is passion and tenderness,  
It is strong embrace and gentle hand-holding,*

*It is open nakedness and hidden mystery,  
It is joyful tears on honeymoon faces, and  
It is tears on wrinkled faces at a golden wedding anniversary.*

*Sex is a quiet look across the room,  
A love note on a pillow,  
A rose laid on a breakfast plate,  
Laughter in the night.  
Sex is life - not all of life - but wrapped up in the meaning of life.  
Sex is your good gift, O God,  
To enrich life,  
To continue the race,  
To communicate,  
To show me who I am,  
To reveal my wife,  
To cleanse through "one flesh".*

*Lord, some people say sex and religion don't mix;  
But your Word says sex is good.  
Help me to keep it good in my life.  
Help me to be open about sex and still protect its mystery.  
Help me to see that sex is neither demon nor deity.  
Help me not to climb into a fantasy world of imaginary sexual partners;  
Keep me in the real world, to love the people you have created.*

*Teach me that my soul does not have to frown at sex for me to be a Christian.*

*It's hard for many people to say, "Thank God for sex!"  
Because for them sex is more a problem than a gift.  
They need to know that sex and gospel can be linked together again.  
They need to hear the good news about sex.  
Show me how I can help them.*

*Thank you, Lord, for making me a sexual being.  
Thank you for showing me how to treat others with trust and love.  
Thank you for letting me talk to you about sex.  
Thank you that I feel free to say: "Thank God for sex!"*

We can thank God for sex, because God is so for it in the confines of marriage.

Sexual relations in marriage are to be regular, continuous and mutually satisfying (it is not for the wife to grit her teeth and think of England!).

### 1 Corinthians 7 : 3 - 5

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

### There are four purposes to the sexual relationship:

1. **Procreation** – Sex is the vehicle God designed to bring babies into the world.
2. **Recreation** – Sex is sacred. Therefore, it must be considered within God's guidelines. It is also to be a pleasurable experience.
3. **Communication** – In marriage the sexual relationship was designed by God to provide a means of expressing the deep unity that the husband and wife feel towards one another.
4. **Stress release** – Sex releases tension, relieves headaches and bolsters the immune system. Sex is like a mini-workout!

### What inhibits sexual relationships?

1. **Ignorance:** Most men are not sex-maniacs, but do have a strong sexual drive. Most women are neither nymphomaniacs nor frigid, but somewhere in between. Women can often have a “take it or leave it” attitude towards sex; while men often have a “take it or leave it” attitude towards romance.

Men are “sight” stimulated (aroused by what he sees); while a woman is “atmosphere” stimulated (aroused by how she is treated). It's good to know these things!

2. **Unhealthy attitudes and beliefs:** Things like: Sex is a reward for good behavior; sex is dirty and cannot be enjoyed; it's something for a woman to endure in order to be submissive; you can't talk about it; sex is only for the young etc.
3. **Performance anxiety:** Comes from the bombardment of our culture, TV etc. This comes from a fear of not being able to function to the husband or wife's satisfaction. You need to learn, grow and mature in this area of your marriage as well.
4. **Fatigue:** Any form of fatigue inhibits sexual response.
5. **Stress:** Stress causes fatigue and irritation, which in turn reduces sexual desire.
6. **Fear of pregnancy:** Sort out your method of contraception.

## What enhances sexual relationships?

1. Be knowledgeable in this area. Read as much information as you can from healthy sources.
2. Openly discuss any and every aspect of this relationship.
3. Refrain from pre-marital sex; as it will reduce the level of respect you have for one another.
4. Begin now to prepare yourself mentally for the first night experience.
5. Plan your wedding day so that you will not be wiped out physically. You will need some time to wind down after the festivities.
6. Remember, a poor or unsatisfactory sexual relationship is symptomatic of something else going on in the relationship.
7. Solve your problems before entering the bedroom.

## What lovemaking means to a man <sup>1</sup>

1. **It satisfies his sex drive** - God designed man to be the aggressor, provider and leader of his family. Somehow that is tied to his sex drive. The woman who resents her husband's sex drive while enjoying his leadership and provision has failed to accept her spouse as he has been created. This does not imply that women lack a strong sex drive; the main difference is that hers is sporadic, while his is almost continual.

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<sup>1</sup> See The Act of Marriage by Tim and Bev LeHaye, ISBN 978-0310211778

2. **It fulfills his manhood** – A man usually possesses a stronger ego than a woman. If he is not a man in his own eyes, he is nothing; and somehow his sex drive seems to be linked to his ego. An impotent, or sexually frustrated man, seldom enjoys a strong self-image. A sexually satisfied husband is a man who will develop self-confidence in other areas of life. That is why when a man has made a mistake, lost his job etc. make love to him, ravish him! A man can endure academic, occupational, and social failure, as long as he and his wife relate well together in the bedroom. To a man, being unsuccessful in the bedroom indicates failure in his life.
3. **It enhances his love for his wife** – Sex not only demonstrates his love for her, but also induces and stirs up love in him for her. Sex enables his love to broaden and deepen for her.
4. **It reduces friction in the home** – A sexually satisfied man is usually a very content man. The result of a satisfying relationship between couples is that it tends to reduce minor irritations in the home. Somehow the world looks better and his difficulties shrink to life-size when sexual harmony prevails.
5. **It provides life's most exciting experience** – The immense emotional and physical explosion that culminates the sex act for the husband is easily the most exciting experience he could ever enjoy on an ongoing basis.

## What lovemaking means to a woman

1. **It fulfills her womanhood** – If a wife considers herself unsuccessful in bed, she will have a difficult time accepting her total womanhood. A healthy self-image is crucial for her as it affects her whole life, from being a homemaker to serving God.
2. **It reassures her of her husband's love** – All people have a basic need to be loved and this is generally truer for women than it is for men. Women have a tremendous capacity for love, both in giving and receiving love.
3. **It satisfies her sex drive** – Although a woman may not have as strong or consistent a sex drive as a man, she still has one that needs to be met!
4. **It relaxes her nervous system** – As with a man, the female nervous system is

closely tied to the reproductive organs; and with the sex act, the “pressure release” experienced in orgasm, contributes towards a much needed relaxant in her nervous system.

**5. The ultimate experience** – This is life’s most exciting experience when properly consummated to orgasm.

The sex act in our marriage is also a vital facet of maintaining and expressing our love and commitment together. If we stop having sexual intercourse with our spouse, then eventually something will die in the marriage and our relationship with our partner will grow cold.

## Becoming a creative lover

- Be available to one another. Have you ever been on a diet? What do you think about all the time? Food! When we aren’t available to meet our partner’s sexual needs, we are putting them on a diet – and guess what they think about all the time? That’s right – sex!
- Be willing to take the initiative and be creative.
- Plan time into your schedule to enjoy each other.
- Redo your bedroom with lots of candles.
- Read books together on this subject.
- How does your wardrobe look? “Holey” and stretched underwear is not exactly sexy!
- Call your spouse to let him or her know you desire him or her.
- Husband, give your wife an evening off. Clean the kitchen etc. while she takes a hot bath.
- Write your spouse a love letter/email/sms.
- Give your spouse an unexpected little gift for no reason at all.
- Give your spouse an all-over body massage.
- Tell your spouse 10 things that you love about him or her.
- Make arrangements to go away overnight.

Your sexual relationship can be as fulfilling and exciting as you want to make it. It takes time and work; but it can become better, more intimate, and more wonderful as the years go by!



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