



MARRIAGE

A LOVE STORY

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Marriage is a lifelong contract between a man, and a woman and is most notably one of the most important decisions one will make in their lifetime. A Christian marriage is a three-part covenant. It is a covenant made between a male husband, a female wife, and God to "love, honor and respect, to remain faithful to one another in sickness and health until death do us part."

Marriage is the first institution in the Word of God. It is a social construct or arrangement with a legal connection, a blessed and privileged sexual contract, a symbol of full commitment, and the foundation of the family, the home, the church, and the nations.

When "man" was initially created "alone" it was the first thing in all of God's creation that the Bible says was "not good."

"And the LORD God said, 'It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him'" (Genesis 2:18, NKJV).

God soon presented a beautiful helper to Adam. An equal so close she was created from his own flesh. *"And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place. Then the rib which the LORD God had taken from man He made into a*

woman, and He brought her to the man. And Adam said: 'This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; She shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.' Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed" (Genesis 2:21-25, NKJV). This speaks of the intimacy a husband and wife enjoy with one another.

As believers, we can have a blessed little slice of heaven in our marriage all of our earthly days. If we are willing to work for it, and if we are willing to follow the pattern of the Scriptures. Or, with neglect, our marriages can easily deteriorate slowly around us. However, it is a choice we make.

We either "**choose**" to make marriage work or "**do not**" choose to make it work. To "**not choose**" is to have made a choice already. I am a firm believer that God has given us the ability and the power of "choice."

"And if it seems evil to you to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD" (Joshua 24:15, NKJV).

God has created us with the ability to make choices, even when we do not have the emotional strength to make that choice. There are weak-hearted married men and women who allow themselves to fall into temptation by flirting with members of the opposite sex at work, or perhaps through a gym membership, and may say that they could not help themselves from falling in love with someone else! We will discuss this more in-depth later.

The answer to that nonsense is: “Yes, you could.” Love is so much more than an emotion. It is a promise, a commitment, a covenant. Love is not just a surge of oxytocin temporarily surging through your bloodstream. It is a conscious choice to have and to hold, to honor and respect, to be faithful until death do us part. It is a promise made before God and many witnesses.

On that infamous day in history known as 911, Sept 1, 2001, the Twin Trade Center Towers in Lower Manhattan, New York were attacked by two passenger jets. Thousands fled the crumbling, burning building as flames entered the sky. However, the heroic firefighters and police officers ran into the building as people were running out of the building. Their natural instinct was to **run away** from fire and danger, but their **commitment to public service and safety** caused them to **make a choice to run into** danger with the hope of saving a few.

The underlying message of this article to all men and women is: Make a choice! Don’t be led by fickle emotions. Stand for what is right in a marriage and make a choice. We all have this God-given ability to make good choices!

Let’s talk about how to have a beautiful marriage!!

Start On The Right Foundation.

Before we talk about the beautiful subject of marriage, we need to start with a good foundation. When I built my house many years ago, I first got a soil test to determine how good the earth was for a foundation. Then, a proper foundation was built that would be more than adequate for the home that we would build upon that foundation. Once the house was built, I would not be able to go back and change the foundation, so time had to be spent making sure the foundation was right.

The good soil for our marriage was Christ. And the good soil for our home was that we were two believers together with a common faith. It was not just a part of it, it was everything.

I did not give a fleeting thought to building our house on a swampy marsh that would not hold the weight of our house. I did not give even a hint to marrying an unbeliever who would not be able to support their weight in a godly marriage.

“Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?” (2 Corinthians 6:14, (NKJV).

“For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ” (1 Corinthians 3:11, NKJV).

The Gift Of Sex

Within the confines of marriage, God has placed the gift of sexual intimacy for procreation and mutual enjoyment and fulfillment. Yes, that’s right. God created it! For married people! And that is where it is blessed. Outside of marriage, it is simply wrong and sinful according to the Bible.

“Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge” (Hebrews 13:4, NKJV).

You simply cannot justify “living together” outside of marriage according to the Word of God. You can say, “Well, we are going to eventually get married,” or “We are trying to see if we love each other first.” Living in fornication in the meantime does not justify anything. If you are living together, I suggest that you ask your partner for a ring and a date for a wedding, or leave.

The Lord wants the absolute best for you! A child of God should not cheapen the marriage experience by living the way that worldly people live. A soul should set high expectations and standards, not compromise.

Maintenance

Not as much now, but when I first started owning an automobile, it required regular maintenance. My Dad, like all good dads, taught me the basics of maintenance. I learned how to regularly change the spark plugs when they needed to be changed. Sometimes, I had to change the spark plug wires. There was a thing called a rotor that I would regularly change. The rotor gave spark, or life, to the spark plugs. Then there were the points that needed to be changed. And don’t forget about changing the oil!

Ships at sea always need constant maintenance. On March 26, 2024, the MV Dali, a Singaporean-flagged container vessel almost 1,000 feet long lost power and crashed into the Francis Scott Key Bridge in Baltimore, MD sending the 1.6-mile-long bridge into the frigid water of the Patapsco River with the tragic loss of life.

“This charge I commit to you, son Timothy, according to the prophecies previously made concerning you, that by them you may wage the good warfare, having faith and a good conscience, which some having rejected, concerning the faith have suffered shipwreck” (1 Timothy 1:18-19, NKJV). Paul in using this term, I wondered if what he meant was that these people quit their “maintenance program” and the result was shipwreck.

Everything worth keeping needs maintenance, constant maintenance; your car, your home, your body, and your marriage. Nothing is on autopilot.

All marriages need a “tune-up.” I learned that the best time to “tune-up” my automobile was *before* it needed a tune-up! The best time to tune-up our marriages is before they need a tune-up! Marriages need a regular maintenance schedule if you will. Your tune-up, or maintenance schedule will be unique to your situation. It need not be expensive, but it needs to be planned and prioritized for you. It should be an important part of your life.

Here are some random ideas:

- Walks together, holding hands.
- Conversations, actively listening.
- Coffee dates. Ice cream dates.
- Bicycle rides together.
- Physical touch of all kinds. (Massages, enjoy your married privileges)
- Playing games together.
- Overnighting together.

Active Listening

Listening to one another, actively listening, is a learned skill. It does not come naturally. In many cases, men have trouble hearing beyond the words. Yes, we often make jokes about men having selective hearing, but this is rooted in some truth. Men tend to discount what they hear, in some cases, when it involves their spouses.

When Jesus was resurrected, Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Mary the mother of James, and other women met an angel at the tomb. The angel said to them, *“Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen”* (Luke 24:5-6)! These dear ladies then ran to the eleven and told the disciples that they found an empty tomb and had just met an angel who had, *“told these things to the eleven and to all the rest”* (Luke 24:9). Luke 24:11 says, *“And their words seemed to them like idle tales, and they did not believe them.”*

Think how sad this is. These women were the first witnesses on earth that Jesus was resurrected as He said He would be. They had met an angel, and the apostles did not believe them. Why? We cannot say for sure, but they certainly were not “actively listening.” When I read this scripture over Easter Sunday, I was sad. I wanted to shout back over time if I could and say, **“Mary - we believe you now!!!”**

I cannot do that, but there is something that I can do. Whenever my sweet wife has something to say, I vow to not discount her words for any reason. I choose to actively listen. I vow to attempt with all of the limited ability I have, as a man, to “listen beyond the words” to what she is saying. This may mean that I listen to the words, read her facial expressions, watch her body language, and take in the whole picture, actively listening.

Being In Agreement

Husbands and wives need to agree on all major issues of life in their household. Yes, there are minor issues that do not require them to consult with one another, but major issues should be agreed upon together. Always remember, marriage is a lifelong commitment and partnership. It is much more than just two people living together under the same roof. It is an equal partnership.

Avoiding Temptation

“Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. 8 Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded” (James 4:7-8, NKJV).

There are many examples we could present from the scriptures regarding temptation such as David and Bathsheba, where David was looking for trouble. He was not in the wrong place at the wrong time; he was almost actively looking for the wrong thing at the wrong time.

Sometimes there is nothing more risky than a bored married man or woman with too much leisure time on their hands, with too much social media screen time in front of them. A bored soul no longer has to search for pornography; pornography now finds them!

Instead of constantly resisting temptation I encourage the married spouse to avoid temptation. For instance, married men should have male friends. Married women should have female friends. Married men should not be chumming with single or other married women. Married women should not be socializing with other

married men. There should be clear lines of demarcation drawn so that there is no possibility of temptation or misunderstandings.

Married men and women should have a personal code of ethics that they live by. For example, when I worked in a large industrial office in my youth with many men and women, I had a personal code that I always followed. Here are some of my rules at work:

1. I would never go out to lunch with another woman, even for a sales meeting.
2. I would never ride in a car with another woman.
3. I would never shut the door to my office with another woman in the office (It was always open for all to see).
4. When working with another woman at work, I frequently referenced my wife by name in my conversation.
5. I never had any after-work social activities.
6. After work, it was “home time.”
7. My wife always knew where I was by my phone calls. No secrets.
8. I always proudly displayed my wedding ring.

I suggest that all married men and women write out their rules of conduct for work and their social life.

The Apostle Paul presented some of the best marriage advice in the New Testament. It is deep. The following scriptures are full of meaning regarding the relationship between a husband and a wife and between Christ and the Church. The two are so completely intertwined. If we can somehow understand the mystery of marriage, we can somehow appreciate the relationship of Christ to His church.

To better understand these scriptures, I will present them in the NIV version. My apologies in advance to those who may not appreciate the NIV so much. In this case, I find that it is a little easier to understand, and I mean no offense in using this version.

“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. 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 hates their own body, but they feed and care for their body, just as Christ does the church—for we are members of his body. “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.” This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church. However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband” (Ephesians 5:22-33, NIV).

Code Of Conduct

Many institutions have a strict code of conduct that is required of their employees. The military has a code of conduct. The police have a code of conduct. Academia has a code of conduct that is required.

Marriage has a code of conduct that should be expected. In each home, there is an informal, understood unique code of conduct that each follows a little differently depending on the specifics of your home.

I would like to offer a few suggestions for a general code of conduct for married couples. It would be good for each married couple to adapt these, and add to them to fit their home, and then to consciously choose to live by them.

1. I promise to keep my marriage vows regardless of my emotional state or feelings.
2. I “choose” to love my spouse above all others, at all times, until death do us part.
3. I choose to not permit socialization with the opposite sex to interfere with my time with my spouse.
4. To me, my spouse is the most important person on the face of the earth and will be treated as such.
5. I will constantly remind my spouse of my love and appreciation for her/him, with words, actions, and physical caresses.
6. I will be frequently intimate with my spouse and not deprive one another.
7. I will pray frequently and mutually with my spouse.
8. I will keep no secrets from my spouse (unless it is a sweet surprise for them!).
9. We will agree on all major decisions, financial and otherwise before decisions are made together.
10. We agree that the husband is the head of the home, but that the wife has an equal say in the workings of the home and her opinion should not be discounted.
11. We agree that we will find frequent little “buckets of time,” and “here and there” for just “you and me.”
12. We promise to respect one another and to use respectful language with each other.
13. We promise to not use threatening language such as the “divorce” word when angry.
14. We promise that we will always find a way to “work things out.”
15. We promise to always love our children, to raise them, nurture, discipline and teach them a strong work ethic.
16. We will have some form of family devotion together regularly.
17. We will not let others’ opinions interfere in our marriage. Your home is your home.

The following words of advice I have borrowed from other authors:

1. Never both be angry at the same time.
2. Never yell at each other unless the house is on fire.
3. If one of you has to win an argument, let it be your spouse.
4. If you have to criticize, do it lovingly.
5. Never bring up mistakes from the past.
6. Never go to sleep with an argument unsettled.
7. At least once a day say a kind word or compliment to your partner.
8. When you have done something wrong, admit it and ask forgiveness.

A good marriage is a blessed, wonderful place to be. And yet it does not just happen, it takes work. It takes effort. It is the most important thing that a man and woman can build on this side of heaven, and it is worth it.

It requires a choice. ✝

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