

Marital Character

What the Bible Says About Marriage	
Genesis 2:18-24	Marriage is God's idea
Genesis 24:58-60	Commitment is essential to a successful marriage
Genesis 29:10, 11	Romance is important
Jeremiah 7:34	Marriage holds times of great joy
Malachi 2:14, 15	Marriage creates the best environment for raising children
Matthew 5:32	Unfaithfulness breaks the bond of trust, the foundation of all relationships
Matthew 19:6	Marriage is permanent
Romans 7:2, 3	Ideally, only death should dissolve marriage
Ephesians 5:21-33	Marriage is based on the principled practice of love, not on feelings
Ephesians 5:23-32	Marriage is a living symbol of Christ and the church
Hebrews 13:4	Marriage is good and honorable

James 1:19-20: Principle #1: My spouse is my brother or sister in the Lord.

¹⁹Dear brothers and sisters, be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to get angry. ²⁰Your anger can never make things right in God's sight.

Practice #1: Treat my spouse as Jesus' brother or sister.

- ❖ *Be quick to listen*
- ❖ *Be slow to speak*
- ❖ *Be slow to become angry*
- ❖ *Explanation: As I learn to listen, I will begin to understand my spouse. It is important for me to see and hear them as God does. We will always be brother and sister in the Lord; we will not always be husband and wife. There is a relationship that supercedes and is more important than the marriage relationship and that is the relationship we have with each other as brothers and sisters in Christ.*
- ❖ *How will I make application this week?*
 1. *When I look at my spouse this week I will see Jesus' sister or brother.*
 2. *When I talk to my spouse this week I will talk to them as Jesus' brother or sister.*
 3. *When I listen to my spouse this week I will listen to him or her as Jesus' brother or sister.*
 4. *How did I do?*

5. *Signature* _____ *date* _____

Romans 12:9-11: Principle #2: After God, put your spouse first.

⁹Don't just pretend that you love others. Really love them. Hate what is wrong. Stand on the side of the good. ¹⁰Love each other with genuine affection,^o and take delight in honoring each other. ¹¹Never be lazy in your work, but serve the Lord enthusiastically.

Practice #2: Respect and honor your spouse.

- ❖ Use genuine affection, i.e. brotherly love
- ❖ Put your spouse first, what does he or she want?
- ❖ Make sacrifices for your spouse
- ❖ Explanation: As I learn to put my spouse first, they begin to see how much I love them. I am willing to make sacrifices of my time, money, and energy in order to make their life a better one. I need to consider them first. What would make their day better? What would make their life easier? After all, they are a gift from God.
- ❖ How will I make application this week?
 1. Each day when I get up and before I start out think “what could I do for my spouse today?”
 2. How does my spouse like to be shown affection? Show him or her in the way they would like to be loved.
 3. What would make this day special for my spouse?
 4. How did I do this week?

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Ephesians 5: 21-33: Principle #3: The Lord talks to husbands and He talks to wives.

²¹And further, you will submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. ²²You wives will submit to your husbands as you do to the Lord. ²³For a husband is the head of his wife as Christ is the head of his body, the church; he gave his life to be her Savior. ²⁴As the church submits to Christ, so you wives must submit to your husbands in everything.

²⁵And you husbands must love your wives with the same love Christ showed the church. He gave up his life for her ²⁶to make her holy and clean, washed by baptism and God's word. ²⁷He did this to present her to himself as a glorious church without a spot or wrinkle or any other blemish. Instead, she will be holy and without fault. ²⁸In the same way, husbands ought to love their wives as they love their own bodies. For a man is actually loving himself when he loves his wife. ²⁹No one hates his own body but lovingly cares for it, just as Christ cares for his body, which is the church. ³⁰And we are his body.

³¹As the Scriptures say, "A man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one."³²This is a great mystery, but it is an illustration of the way Christ and the church are one. ³³So again I say, each man must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.

Practice #3: I must apply the principles for me regardless of what my spouse does or does not do.

- ❖ ***We will submit to each other out of reverence to Christ***
- ❖ ***Wives will submit to their husbands as to the Lord***
- ❖ ***Husbands must love their wives as Christ does***
- ❖ ***Husbands and wives are the same person***
- ❖ ***Explanation: Submission is not something we take lightly. It seems to place us in a one down position. True submission is mutual but different. When God speaks to husbands in the Bible, He does not say 'husband if your wife does this you then do the following'. He says, "Husbands do this." A husband's obedience is not dependent on his wife's obedience. In the same way God talks to wives independently from their husbands. He treats them as equals but with different areas of responsibility. A wife's obedience to God is not dependent on whether or not her husband obeys God. God places us all under authority and all authority is His. Remember that when you submit to one another you are first submitting to Him.***
- ❖ ***How will we make application this week?***
 1. *How will I submit to God this week?*
 2. *In what way will my behavior of submission to God be reflected in my submission to my spouse?*
 3. *Am I willing to die for my spouse?*
 4. *How then did I do living for my spouse this week?*

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1st Peter 3:1-7: Principle #4: When I stand before Christ, I will only have to account for my actions not my spouse's.

¹In the same way, you wives must accept the authority of your husbands, even those who refuse to accept the Good News. Your godly lives will speak to them better than any words. They will be won over ²by watching your pure, godly behavior.

³Don't be concerned about the outward beauty that depends on fancy hairstyles, expensive jewelry, or beautiful clothes. ⁴You should be known for the beauty that comes from within, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is so precious to God. ⁵That is the way the holy women of old made themselves beautiful. They trusted God and accepted the authority of their husbands. ⁶For instance, Sarah obeyed her husband, Abraham, when she called him her master. You are her daughters when you do what is right without fear of what your husbands might do.

Husbands

⁷In the same way, you husbands must give honor to your wives. Treat her with understanding as you live together. She may be weaker than you are, but she is your equal partner in God's gift of new life. If you don't treat her as you should, your prayers will not be heard.

Practice #4: Continuously think of my responsibilities not my spouse's.

- ❖ ***We are all under Christ's authority***
- ❖ ***Wives are under their husband's authority regardless***
- ❖ ***Husbands must honor their wives regardless***
- ❖ ***Explanation: In heaven, all Christians will stand before the judgment seat of Christ, not to be punished but to be rewarded. When you stand before Christ to give an account of your life He is not going to ask you how your spouse lived their life or what they did or did not do. He is going to ask you to give an account of your life and what you did or did not do in obedience to Him. Wives will have to explain how they came under their husband's authority whether their husband was a Christian or treated them in a Christ like manner or not. Husbands will have to explain how they honored their wives and treated them with respect and understanding regardless of whether or not their wives came under their authority or not. If the wife submits to her husband's authority under Christ's direction and the leading of the Holy Spirit in her life, she may indeed influence him to become a godly man. If a husband honors his wife as a mutual partner in Christ, his prayers will be heard. There is a reward for doing God's will as husbands and wives regardless of whether or not your spouse does both here and in heaven.***
- ❖ ***How will I make application this week?***
 1. *Did I submit to my husband's authority under Christ?*
 2. *Did I honor my wife, as Christ would have me honor her?*
 3. *Did I influence my spouse some way for the kingdom of heaven this week as God asked me to?*
 4. *Could I stand before Christ at the end of this week and say, "I did what you asked me to do" regardless of what my spouse did?*

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Hosea chapters 1 & 3: Principle #5: God's model for marriage.

Practice #5: Follow God's model for marriage not the world's model.

- ❖ *Follow God's direction in all things even if it doesn't make sense.*
- ❖ *Do not be judgmental of your spouse.*
- ❖ *Be forgiving of your spouse no matter what.*
- ❖ *Explanation: God's ways are not our ways. When we marry someone we don't know everything about their past. Most marital problems are not problems of the marriage, they are problems brought into the marriage. We will frequently not understand our spouse. Why are they doing what they do? There is always an explanation. God asks us to look below the surface. He asks us to try to see our spouse as He does. How does He see them? He sees them as someone worthy of redemption no matter what they have done. He loves them regardless. In fact, He loves them even when they are at their most unlovable. He loved us enough to send His son to die for us. Not because we were good or worthy of such a sacrifice, but because He loved us. That is how He asks us to love our spouse.*
- ❖ *How will I make application this week?*
 1. *How have I showed God's unconditional love to my spouse this week?*
 2. *Where and when have I made an effort to try to understand them and love them regardless?*

Signature _____ date _____

Ecclesiastes 4:7-12: Principle #6: “It is not good for man to be alone.” Genesis 2:18ff

Practice #6: Preserve your companionship. That is the reason you married in the first place.

- ❖ We are social beings with a high need for companionship.
- ❖ When and how are you getting your companionship needs met in your marital relationship?
- ❖ Are you finding you have to get some of your companionship needs met outside of your marriage?
- ❖ Explanation: After God created Adam; God realized it was not good for Adam to be by himself. He needed company. God initially created all sorts of animals to be Adam’s companions and asked Adam to name them. This was not enough. Then God created Eve or woman, which literally means “from man”. This was enough. Here finally was man’s companion. Paul says in 1st Corinthians 7 that it is better to stay single and serve God then to marry, but it is all right to marry. He was referring to the fact that it is sometimes difficult to please God and your spouse especially if they seem in conflict. However, even he recognized under the influence of the Holy Spirit, that it was better for a couple to marry then to be in sexual torment regarding each other. That is how God made us with a deep underlying need for companionship. In Ecclesiastes we can see why. What is the point of working so hard if you are not sharing or leaving it to someone except if you are working for the Kingdom of Heaven? Two are better than one and three are better yet.
- ❖ How will I demonstrate my need for companionship and meet my spouse’s need for companionship this week?

Signature _____ date _____

Titus 2: 1-15: Get a mentor!

Practice #8: Marriage is too hard to figure out on your own. Find a wise, godly person of the same sex to teach you.

- ❖ *God knew we could not figure marriage out on our own.*
- ❖ *Many of our models for marriage our not good.*
- ❖ *We need to look to others who have demonstrated marital maturity for guidance.*
- ❖ *Explanation: In school they teach us a lot of things, but two things they don't teach us are marriage and parenting. Most of us learned how to do marriage and parenting by watching the models of our own parents. Some times those models are excellent and sometimes not. Knowing this, God wants us to find those men and women who can disciple us or teach us how to be godly husbands and wives. We need to look around us for the examples of godly men and women who live maturely and demonstrate marital maturity. Look for individuals who do marriage well and who you think would be willing to share from their experience to teach you marriage and how to be godly men and women.*
- ❖ *Who do I know that I can approach to teach me how to have a more mature marriage?*

Signature _____ *date* _____

Song of Solomon: Principle #9: Your Body is not Your Own

Practice #9: we: intended for pleasure” as Ed Wheat writes. Sex inside of marriage—Yes! Sex outside of marriage—No!

- ❖ God intended us to have sex, but only in the context of marriage. All other sexual activity is taboo or forbidden. It doesn't get any simpler than that.
- ❖ We continuously violate this principle in our love-starved culture and pay dearly for it. There is a heavy price to the violation of this principle. Just examine Proverbs chapters 4-6.
- ❖ Just as it is “No!” outside of marriage, it is “Yes!” inside of marriage.
- ❖ Explanation: 1st Corinthians 7:3-5 confirms this principle. Now there are times where you don't feel like making love. However, be careful here. While we can't have sex on demand, the continued erosion of our lovemaking places us both at risk for sexual and emotional intimacy from others. Over the course of a marriage there may be many legitimate reasons not to make love physically; however, sex is a tool to be used for intimacy and not a weapon to be used for or against the other person.
- ❖ How did we demonstrate our physical intimacy as well as our emotional intimacy appropriately this week?

❖ *Signature _____ date _____*

Ephesians 4:17-24: Let God's Light shine in your marriage

Practice #10: Let the light of God's truth shine in your marriage so your marriage can be a shining example to others.

- ❖ *Don't live in the darkness. Don't pretend to be something or someone you are not.*
- ❖ *Let your spouse know the truth of your activities. Share in everything you do.*
- ❖ *Except for fun as in a surprise, don't keep secrets. Secrets will erode trust and confidence and intimacy in a marriage.*
- ❖ *Be the new person God has called you to be in the marriage, a child of the light.*
- ❖ *Explanation: God wants us to share openly with one another. He doesn't want us to use our freedom in Christ as new people to steal from our spouse. We can steal in many different ways. How we deal honestly with our spouses as men and women of integrity determines how trust will grow and deepen in our marriages. Every time we hide, deceive and steal from our spouses, we fray the edge and eventually the core of our relationship. As we deal honestly and openly as people of the light our spouse will see our love as we our transparent.*
- ❖ *How was I open and transparent with my spouse this week? How did he or she know what I was dealing with in my life and even what was troubling me?*

❖ *Signature* _____ *date* _____