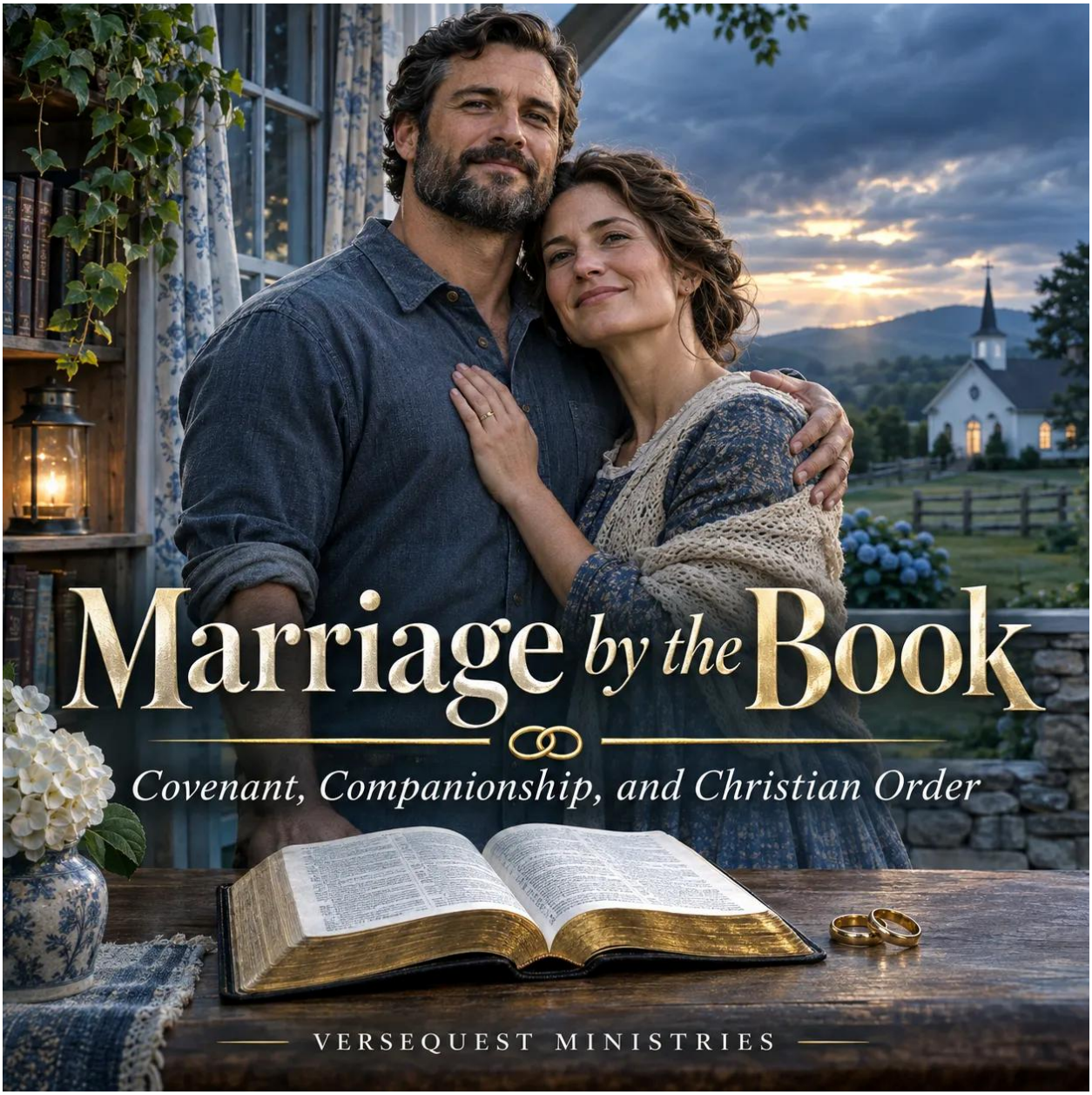
Marriage by the Book

Covenant, Companionship, and Christian Order

Series 1-10

By Paul Tackett

VerseQuest Ministries




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Marriage by the Book
Covenant, Companionship, and Christian Order

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First Edition — November 2026

Published by VerseQuest Ministries
Written and compiled by Pastor Paul Tackett

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This publication is intended for personal Bible study, Christian education, spiritual encouragement, and the edification of believers. Readers are encouraged to study the Scriptures carefully, examine the biblical references provided, and share the truths of God's Word with others.

Scripture Quotations

All Scripture quotations throughout this publication are taken exclusively from the **King James Version (KJV) of the Holy Bible**.

VerseQuest Ministries upholds the King James Bible as the final authority in all matters of Christian faith, doctrine, and practice.

Doctrinal Statement

This publication presents Bible-based teaching from a dispensational, Bible-believing Christian position, maintaining the distinction between Israel and the Church, salvation by grace through faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ, and the importance of rightly dividing the Word of truth according to 2 Timothy 2:15.

The teachings concerning marriage, covenant responsibilities, biblical headship, submission, companionship, and Christian conduct are presented for the purpose of encouraging obedience to the Scriptures and strengthening Christian homes.

Publication Notice

This book is an original VerseQuest Ministries Bible study publication consisting of ten comprehensive essays, an introduction, a conclusion, and supplementary biblical teaching charts.

All original commentary, explanations, applications, and instructional content are presented as part of the teaching ministry of Pastor Paul Tackett and VerseQuest Ministries.

VERSEQUEST MINISTRIES

Teaching the Word of God. Defending Sound Doctrine. Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth.

“Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”

2 Timothy 2:15 (KJV)

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Marriage by the Book – Introduction

Covenant, Companionship, and Christian Order

There was a marriage in the garden of Eden before there was a courthouse, a church building, a marriage counselor, a denominational headquarters, or a government official authorized to issue wedding licenses. There was no elaborate ceremony, no expensive reception, no photographer arranging the participants beneath a carefully decorated archway, and no committee of experts explaining how the relationship ought to function. There was Almighty God, a man formed from the dust of the ground, and a woman fashioned from that man's rib. That was sufficient. Genesis 2:22 declares, **"And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man."** There is the beginning of the institution. God made the woman, God brought her to the man, and God established the relationship. Marriage was not invented by human society, discovered through cultural experimentation, or gradually developed by people attempting to organize their domestic arrangements. It came directly from the Creator. And here we are, thousands of years later, surrounded by a civilization that has managed to produce enough theories about marriage to fill entire libraries while increasingly demonstrating its inability to obey the few straightforward instructions God gave concerning it. **The trouble with modern marriage is not that Almighty God failed to provide a workable design. The trouble is that fallen humanity has spent centuries attempting to improve the blueprint while ignoring the Architect.**

Genesis 2:18 contains the divine declaration upon which the first marriage was established: **"And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him."** Notice who identified the need and who supplied the answer. Adam did not organize a campaign demanding companionship, and Eve did not appear through some accidental development in the natural order. God determined that the man required a suitable companion, and God provided her. The woman was not created to be an inferior species, a domestic servant, a personal possession, or a permanent opponent in some ridiculous contest for household supremacy. She was made as an help meet for the man, sharing his human nature while possessing the distinction and responsibilities God intended. Genesis 2:24 then establishes the enduring principle: **"Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh."** There are the foundations of the household: leaving, cleaving, and becoming one flesh. The first marriage was established before sin entered the world, before governments existed, before Israel received the law, and long before the New Testament Church was revealed. Marriage belongs to the original creation order. **God did not establish the home as an experiment awaiting improvement from future**

generations. He established it as an institution requiring obedience from the people who entered it.

Now consider the confusion that has developed around something God made so plain. On one side, modern society insists that the biblical order of marriage must be discarded because it does not agree with contemporary opinions concerning personal independence, authority, and human relationships. On the other side, certain religious people have managed to twist the same biblical order into an excuse for selfishness, intimidation, cruelty, and the mistreatment of those they have been commanded to love. One crowd wants to erase the husband's headship; another wants to turn the husband into a little dictator whose every personal preference carries the authority of Heaven. One crowd treats submission as an insult to human dignity; another treats it as permission to deprive a wife of her conscience, wisdom, or rightful responsibility before God. Neither position comes from rightly dividing the Word of truth. Ephesians 5:23 declares, **"For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church,"** but verse 25 commands, **"Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it."** Both statements belong to the same inspired passage. **The man who quotes the first while ignoring the second has not defended biblical marriage. He has demonstrated that he can read selectively whenever personal advantage is involved.**

The Bible establishes responsibilities for both husband and wife without pretending that those responsibilities are identical. The husband is commanded to love, nourish, cherish, provide, protect, and exercise responsible leadership under the authority of Jesus Christ. The wife is instructed to recognize the order God established, demonstrate godly conduct, exercise wisdom, and fulfill her responsibilities faithfully. Neither receives permission to behave wickedly because the other has failed. A husband cannot excuse bitterness because his wife has disappointed him, and a wife cannot justify rebellion because her husband is imperfect. Colossians 3:19 commands, **"Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them."** Colossians 3:18 instructs, **"Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord."** There is divine order accompanied by divine accountability. And let us settle something immediately: submission does not require participation in sin, and headship does not authorize abuse. No husband has been given the right to replace Almighty God in his wife's conscience, and no wife has been instructed to follow a man into wickedness merely because he occupies a position of household responsibility. **Biblical authority is never a license to disobey the God who established it.**

One of the great tragedies of modern marriage is that husbands and wives have become so occupied with defending their personal rights that they have neglected their personal

responsibilities. The husband demands respect while refusing to demonstrate sacrificial love. The wife demands consideration while treating her husband with continual contempt. Both can explain what the other ought to be doing, and neither seems particularly interested in examining the commandments directed toward himself. The result is a household containing two people who have become experts in each other's failures and beginners in their own obedience. The Bible does not command husbands and wives to spend their married lives competing for superiority. First Corinthians 11:11 declares, **"Nevertheless neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord."** God established a relationship of companionship within an order of responsibility. The man needs the woman, the woman needs the man within that marital relationship, and both remain accountable to the LORD. **The home was not designed as a battlefield where two sinners compete to see who can exercise the greatest amount of selfishness while quoting the largest number of Bible verses.**

The Scriptures also place tremendous emphasis upon the character of a godly wife. Proverbs 31:10 asks, **"Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies."** The chapter proceeds to describe a woman possessing strength, wisdom, diligence, generosity, industry, financial judgment, and the confidence of her husband. She considers a field and purchases it. She provides for her household. She assists those in need. She opens her mouth with wisdom, and the law of kindness governs her speech. This is hardly the portrait of a helpless woman whose only qualification is the ability to follow instructions without thinking. The Bible recognizes her strength without encouraging rebellion and commends her wisdom without abolishing the responsibilities God established within marriage. Proverbs 31:30 identifies the foundation of her excellence: **"Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the LORD, she shall be praised."** There is a description of godly womanhood that cannot be improved through fashionable theories. **A woman does not need to overthrow God's order to demonstrate strength, and a man does not need to diminish his wife to demonstrate leadership.**

Yet marriage involves considerably more than the proper recognition of authority. It requires companionship, affection, honesty, patience, forgiveness, financial stewardship, physical faithfulness, and the willingness to carry ordinary responsibilities together. Ecclesiastes 4:9 declares, **"Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour."** Verse 10 adds, **"For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow."** The passage concerns the advantages of companionship, and its principle applies naturally to the marriage relationship. A husband and wife ought to assist one another through difficulty rather than continually manufacturing additional difficulty for each other. There will be seasons of sickness, financial strain, discouragement, disappointment, and unexpected responsibility. There will be times when one spouse possesses strength that the other

temporarily lacks. There will be disagreements requiring patience and failures requiring repentance. None of these circumstances necessarily means that the marriage has become defective. They demonstrate that two fallen human beings must practice the instructions God has given them. **Marriage is not proven by two people who never encounter a storm. It is tested by what those people do when the storm finally arrives.**

And then there is the tongue, that remarkably small member of the human body capable of producing enough destruction to make an entire household miserable. Proverbs 18:21 declares, **"Death and life are in the power of the tongue."** A husband may be faithful in financial provision and still wound his wife through continual criticism, humiliation, or cruel speech. A wife may fulfill numerous household responsibilities while destroying companionship through sarcasm, bitterness, or the habit of publicly exposing her husband's failures. Some married couples can discuss difficult biblical doctrines with remarkable patience but become completely unreasonable when deciding where to eat supper. James 1:19 commands believers to be **"swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath."** That instruction ought to be practiced in the home before it is presented as excellent advice to everybody outside it. Ephesians 4:29 commands communication that ministers grace to the hearers. The marriage relationship does not provide an exemption from Christian conduct. **A man who can speak graciously to strangers but treats his wife with contempt has not mastered communication. He has merely learned where he believes he can get away with sin.**

We must also examine the physical relationship that God established within marriage. Hebrews 13:4 declares, **"Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge."** The Bible does not treat lawful marital intimacy as filthy or spiritually inferior. God established the marriage relationship before the fall, and the corruption introduced by sin does not make His original institution unclean. Yet the same Scripture that honours marriage condemns adultery, fornication, lust, and sexual immorality. First Corinthians 7 addresses the reciprocal responsibilities of husbands and wives, establishing mutual consideration rather than selfish domination. Proverbs 5 directs the husband's affection toward the wife of his youth while warning against the destruction associated with unlawful relationships. These instructions are particularly necessary in a world that has commercialized lust, normalized pornography, and attempted to separate physical pleasure from moral responsibility. **The marriage bed belongs within the covenant God established. It is not a playground for selfishness, a weapon for manipulation, or an excuse to disregard the dignity of the person joined to you in marriage.**

Financial stewardship presents another area where biblical instruction is frequently neglected. First Timothy 5:8 declares, **“But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.”** The immediate passage concerns family responsibilities, particularly the care of widows, but its principle establishes the seriousness of providing for those entrusted to one's care. Proverbs 22:7 warns, **“the borrower is servant to the lender.”** First Timothy 6:10 identifies the love of money as the root of all evil. A household can become enslaved to debt, consumed by covetousness, and divided through financial deception long before its occupants recognize the spiritual consequences. One spouse purchases what the family cannot afford, another conceals obligations, and both begin comparing their possessions with people whose circumstances they do not understand. The world encourages this foolishness because dissatisfied customers make profitable customers. Scripture commands contentment, honesty, diligence, and responsible stewardship. **A larger income cannot cure a covetous heart, and an expensive house cannot guarantee that the people living inside it possess a peaceful home.**

But perhaps the most searching responsibility in marriage is forgiveness. Two sinners living together will eventually discover that both possess weaknesses requiring correction. Ephesians 4:31–32 commands believers to put away bitterness, wrath, anger, clamour, evil speaking, and malice, and then declares, **“And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.”** There is the Christian standard. A husband cannot continually rehearse his wife's failures while expecting God to admire his remarkable memory. A wife cannot preserve every offense as ammunition for future arguments and then claim that bitterness has nothing to do with her conduct. Yet forgiveness must never be twisted into permission for continuing wickedness. Genuine repentance requires honesty and a turning from sin. Serious abuse, violence, threats, and deliberate cruelty must not be concealed beneath religious language. Seeking protection and legitimate assistance is not a rejection of Scripture. The Bible commands forgiveness, but it does not command Christians to pretend that evil has become righteousness. **Grace is not a license for the offender to continue sinning, and forgiveness is not a requirement that the injured person surrender all wisdom and accountability.**

There is also a tremendous doctrinal significance attached to Christian marriage that reaches beyond ordinary household responsibilities. Ephesians 5:31 repeats the language of Genesis concerning the husband and wife becoming one flesh, and verse 32 declares, **“This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.”** The Apostle Paul reveals that the relationship between husband and wife illustrates the relationship between Jesus Christ and His Church. This doctrine must be rightly divided. Marriage was

established in Eden before the Mosaic law, before Israel became a nation, and before the body of Christ was revealed through the New Testament ministry of the Apostle Paul. Adam and Eve were not members of the New Testament Church, and the marriage ceremony does not unite sinners spiritually with Jesus Christ. Salvation remains by grace through faith in His finished work. But the earthly institution provides a living illustration of spiritual truth. The husband's sacrificial love points toward Christ's love for His Church, while the order of marriage illustrates responsibilities that carry tremendous doctrinal significance. **God established the marriage relationship in Genesis, and the Holy Ghost later revealed in Ephesians that the picture reaches considerably farther than the garden of Eden.**

That doctrinal connection ought to humble every Christian husband who approaches it seriously. Ephesians 5:25 declares, **"Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it."** The standard is not personal convenience, human pride, or the customs of the surrounding society. It is the sacrificial love demonstrated by Jesus Christ. Romans 5:8 declares, **"But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."** No earthly husband can repeat the redeeming sacrifice of Calvary, and no husband becomes the saviour of his wife through the marriage relationship. Christ alone accomplished redemption. Nevertheless, the character of His love establishes the pattern of self-giving responsibility. The husband is commanded to nourish and cherish his wife, not to employ her as an instrument for personal advantage. The wife likewise receives biblical instructions concerning reverence and godly conduct. **The mystery of Christ and the Church reaches into Heaven, but the obedience required of the Christian husband and wife must become visible at home.**

Throughout this ten-part series, we will return repeatedly to one foundation: the King James Bible is sufficient to establish the doctrine and responsibilities of Christian marriage. We will not allow modern opinion to rewrite the creation account, religious tradition to manufacture commandments God never gave, or personal experience to become the final authority over Scripture. We will distinguish the original institution established in Genesis, the responsibilities revealed under Israel's historical circumstances, and the doctrinal instructions addressed to believers in the present dispensation of grace. We will examine what the passages actually say rather than borrowing convenient expressions while ignoring their contexts. And we will address the practical responsibilities that reach into ordinary married life, where a person's profession is tested through conduct rather than public applause. **A marriage can possess an impressive religious appearance while its occupants quietly refuse the commandments that would make their profession**

meaningful. The purpose is not to decorate the home with additional biblical language. It is to bring the home beneath the authority of the Book.

There is no promise in Scripture that every Christian marriage will become a pleasant experience merely because both participants possess a Bible. The presence of a Bible does not automatically produce obedience any more than the possession of a hammer automatically makes a man a carpenter. The Word must be believed, studied, rightly divided, and practiced. There will be legitimate differences in personality, responsibilities, health, financial circumstances, and the particular difficulties families encounter. There may be serious wrongdoing requiring protection and accountability, and there will certainly be ordinary failures requiring humility and correction. But none of those circumstances gives fallen humanity authority to rewrite God's institution. Psalm 127:1 declares, **"Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it."** Human effort, wise planning, and faithful responsibility remain necessary, but they must operate beneath divine authority. **The most beautifully furnished house in the neighbourhood may be spiritually bankrupt, while a modest home governed by the Word of God possesses riches that cannot be purchased with money.**

So we begin where marriage itself began: with Almighty God. We will follow the institution from Genesis into the practical instructions of the New Testament, examining the husband, the wife, the covenant, the companionship, the responsibilities, the dangers, and the extraordinary spiritual truth connected with Christ and His Church. The objective is not to defend every custom associated with traditional marriage or pretend that every household calling itself Christian has faithfully represented the Bible. The objective is to establish what God actually commanded and confront the conduct that contradicts it. Husbands must stop using headship as an excuse for selfishness. Wives must stop allowing worldly rebellion to determine their understanding of submission. Both must reject the bitterness, lust, dishonesty, pride, and materialism that destroy fellowship within the home. Both must recognize that the marriage covenant involves obligations reaching far beyond the celebration of a wedding. **God never commanded husbands and wives to become perfect human beings before entering marriage. He commanded His people to obey His Word, and He has given them no permission to abandon that responsibility when marriage becomes difficult.**

The Christian household must finally be understood in light of the grace of God. Ephesians 2:8–9 declares, **"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast."** Marriage does not save anybody. Submission does not purchase eternal life, headship does not produce regeneration, and faithful household management cannot wash away a single sin.

Salvation belongs exclusively to the Lord Jesus Christ, who died for our sins, was buried, and rose again according to the Scriptures. But those who have trusted Him are instructed to walk in obedience. Titus 2:11–12 declares that the grace of God teaches believers to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world. That instruction includes the home. It includes the husband and the wife. It includes their speech, their money, their physical relationship, their responsibilities, and their treatment of one another. **The grace that saves the Christian does not excuse him from obeying God in marriage. It teaches him to stop living as though God's commandments were intended for everybody except himself.**

And that brings us to the heart of this entire series. The first marriage required no human invention because God Himself established it. The Christian marriage requires no replacement foundation because God has already supplied the truth necessary to understand it. What is needed is not another revolution against Scripture, another fashionable theory concerning personal fulfillment, or another collection of religious excuses for conduct God has already condemned. What is needed is a return to the Book. The husband must love his wife as Christ loved the Church. The wife must fulfill her responsibilities in the fear of God. Both must speak truthfully, exercise charity, remain faithful, practice forgiveness, handle their resources wisely, and submit their conduct to the authority of Scripture. The years will pass, physical strength may diminish, circumstances will change, and the excitement surrounding the wedding will eventually become a memory. But the Word of God will remain. Isaiah 40:8 declares, **“The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever.”** That is a foundation worth building upon. **The world can teach a couple how to arrange a wedding that people will remember for a day. Almighty God has given the instructions for building a marriage whose testimony can endure for generations. The choice is whether we will follow the changing opinions of men or the unchanging authority of God's Word. That is Marriage by the Book — Covenant, Companionship, and Christian Order.**

1 of 10 – Marriage by the Book – The First Marriage: When God Established the Home

Series: Marriage by the Book — Covenant, Companionship, and Christian Order

Key Passage: Genesis 2:18, 24 (KJV)

“And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him.” — Genesis 2:18

“Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.” — Genesis 2:24

Introduction

The first marriage took place before there was a courthouse to issue a license, a preacher to conduct a ceremony, a government to write a statute, or a religious organization to establish a marriage committee. There was no wedding planner in Eden, no denominational manual lying beneath the tree of life, and no panel of educated experts explaining to Adam how his relationship ought to function. There was Almighty God, a man formed from the dust of the ground, and a woman fashioned by the hand of the Creator. That was sufficient. The institution of marriage did not begin with civilization; civilization began with marriage already established. The home was not an afterthought added to human society when somebody discovered that families were convenient arrangements for raising children and dividing household expenses. God established the home before sin entered the world, before the first child was conceived, before the first murder was committed, and before the human race had produced enough people to organize a village. If a man wants to understand marriage, therefore, he must begin where God began. He must go back beyond modern legislation, cultural customs, religious traditions, and the latest fashionable theories concerning relationships. He must return to Genesis, open his King James Bible, and permit the One who instituted marriage to explain what He instituted. The manufacturer of a thing generally knows more about its construction than the fellow who has spent his life taking it apart, and modern civilization has produced an impressive collection of experts who can explain almost everything about marriage except how to keep one together.

The problem with much of the modern discussion concerning marriage is that people begin with human experience and attempt to make Scripture conform to it. Somebody has an unhappy marriage, somebody else has an unusual arrangement, another person has a social theory, and before long the Bible is placed upon the examination table while the opinions of fallen men sit in judgment over its contents. That procedure is exactly backward. Genesis 1:27 declares, “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.” There is the divine declaration, written before any modern argument began. God created mankind, God established the distinction between male and female, and God determined how the first man and woman would be brought together. The passage does not describe human beings inventing marriage through social experimentation. It describes God acting with purpose, wisdom, and authority. Consequently, the Christian does not approach marriage as a negotiable arrangement whose meaning must be revised whenever public opinion changes direction.

He approaches it as an institution established by the Creator. Human customs surrounding weddings may change. Civil regulations may differ between nations. Households may arrange their daily responsibilities in different ways. But the original foundation does not become obsolete merely because another generation has decided that it knows more than the Author. A society can change the wording on a thousand legal documents without changing a single word of Genesis 2:24.

There is another important distinction that must be established before proceeding. Marriage was instituted before the fall of man, but every marriage since the fall has involved sinners. The first marriage was established in innocence; the marriages we observe today are conducted in a world contaminated by sin, selfishness, pride, deception, lust, and rebellion against God. That difference explains why the biblical ideal must be distinguished from the miserable conduct of people who refuse to follow it. The failure of a husband does not prove that God designed marriage incorrectly. The sin of a wife does not establish that the institution itself is defective. Neither does the existence of unhappy homes authorize humanity to rewrite the original arrangement. Romans 3:23 declares, “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God,” and that includes the husband, the wife, the marriage counselor, and the distinguished professor who has recently published another theory explaining why the Bible needs correcting. The question before us is not whether every marriage has reflected God's original purpose. Plainly, it has not. The question is whether God's purpose remains right when human beings fail to obey it. The Bible answers that question by taking us back to the beginning, where marriage stood upon divine authority before human rebellion had introduced confusion into the home. The trouble with marriage is not that God supplied a defective blueprint; it is that fallen men keep attempting construction while refusing to read the instructions.

1. Before There Was a Home, There Was a Creator

The first chapter of Genesis establishes the authority upon which the entire doctrine of marriage rests. Genesis 1:26 begins, “And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness,” and the following verse declares that God created mankind male and female. Notice who is speaking, who is acting, and who possesses the authority. God speaks; God creates; God determines the distinction between the sexes; and God gives mankind its original responsibilities. Adam did not crawl out of a swamp, develop an upright posture, invent religion to explain his surroundings, and eventually decide that marriage would be a convenient social institution. According to Genesis 2:7, “the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.” The Bible presents man as a direct creation of God, not the accidental product of an unguided process. That fact is essential to the doctrine of marriage because the

authority of the institution is inseparable from the authority of the One who created its participants. Remove the Creator from Genesis, and marriage becomes another human arrangement subject to whatever definition happens to be popular. Retain the Creator, and marriage possesses an authority greater than any government, academic institution, or passing cultural fashion.

Genesis 1:28 adds another remarkable fact: “And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it.” The blessing precedes the fall. God did not establish the relationship between man and woman as a punishment for sin, nor was the responsibility to be fruitful and multiply introduced as an emergency measure after Adam disobeyed. Marriage belongs to the original creation order. The Lord gave mankind responsibility in the earth, and the establishment of the first household was consistent with that responsibility. Yet care must be exercised here. The command to be fruitful and multiply reveals an original purpose of the union, but it does not mean that a married couple unable to have children possesses an inferior marriage. Children are a blessing of God, not a certificate proving that a marriage is genuine. Nor should anyone take the responsibilities given to Adam and Eve and pretend that every Christian household has been personally commanded to reproduce the population of the earth. Scripture must be read according to its words and setting. Genesis establishes the foundation of marriage, including its relationship to human fruitfulness, without authorizing foolish conclusions that the passage itself does not teach.

The order is particularly instructive. God created the man, prepared his surroundings, assigned responsibilities, and then provided the woman. Genesis 2:15 states that the LORD God placed Adam in the garden of Eden “to dress it and to keep it.” Adam had a responsibility before he had a wife. He was not created to sit beneath a tree waiting for somebody to bring him supper. His work was appointed by God before sin introduced the painful toil described later in Genesis 3. That is worth remembering in an age when some men enjoy quoting passages about authority while displaying remarkable ignorance concerning responsibility. The first man was entrusted with work before he was entrusted with a wife. God did not provide Eve as a replacement for Adam's obligations, and the woman was not created to make a lazy man comfortable. The principle is straightforward: marriage joins two people in a divinely established relationship, but it does not cancel their accountability before the LORD. Adam remained responsible to the God who created him, and Eve would likewise be accountable to that same God. The home was established under divine authority, not as a little kingdom in which one fallen human being could do whatever he pleased.

2. It Is Not Good That the Man Should Be Alone

Genesis 2:18 contains a statement that deserves careful attention: “And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him.” Throughout Genesis 1, God repeatedly pronounces His creation good. At the conclusion of the sixth day, Genesis 1:31 declares that everything God had made was “very good.” Yet Genesis 2 takes us into the details of that creative work and records the divine declaration that the man's solitary condition was not good. There is no contradiction. Genesis 1 presents the completed creation; Genesis 2 explains how God brought the man and woman together within that work. The statement concerning Adam's solitude appears before Eve is made and before the original human arrangement is complete. God was not admitting a mistake in His workmanship. He was revealing the purpose for which the woman would be created. Adam was complete as a man, possessing the life God had given him, but he had not yet received the companion God intended for him. The need was identified by God Himself. Adam did not submit a complaint, organize a demonstration, or demand that Heaven revise its arrangements. The Creator declared what was needed and provided the answer.

The expression “an help meet for him” has suffered from more careless handling than some people would care to admit. The word meet in this passage communicates suitability or fitness. The Lord was preparing a helper corresponding to Adam, someone appropriate to his nature and the responsibilities of human life. God did not say that He would manufacture a servant, acquire a piece of property, or produce an inferior creature to carry out Adam's personal preferences. Neither did He say that Adam required an identical duplicate of himself. The divine arrangement involved distinction and correspondence. Genesis 2:20 explains that after Adam named the living creatures, “for Adam there was not found an help meet for him.” The animals possessed life, but none corresponded to the man in the manner required for marriage. Adam could name the creatures, observe their characteristics, and exercise the dominion God had assigned him, but no animal could become his wife. The woman had to be of the same human nature as the man. That fundamental distinction may appear obvious until one remembers how frequently modern civilization manages to become confused about matters that Genesis settles in a sentence. The answer to man's need for marital companionship was not discovered among the beasts of the field. It was provided by the Creator of both man and woman.

This passage also establishes something frequently overlooked: the institution of marriage is good, but that does not mean every individual is commanded to marry. The original statement concerns Adam's circumstances and God's purpose in establishing the first human household. It should not be twisted into an accusation against every unmarried believer. The Apostle Paul, writing under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, explains in 1 Corinthians 7 that unmarried life can permit a believer to attend upon the Lord without the

particular responsibilities belonging to marriage. In verse 7 he declares, “For I would that all men were even as I myself. But every man hath his proper gift of God, one after this manner, and another after that.” A Bible believer must be capable of holding Genesis 2 and 1 Corinthians 7 together without pretending that one cancels the other. Marriage is God's institution, not a universal requirement for salvation, spiritual maturity, or usefulness in Christian service. The man who marries is not automatically more spiritual than the man who remains unmarried, and the unmarried believer is not defective because God has not given him a wife. The first marriage reveals God's original arrangement for human companionship and the establishment of the family; it does not authorize Christians to invent commandments concerning the personal circumstances of every saint.

3. The Rib, the Deep Sleep, and the Woman God Made

Genesis 2:21 records one of the most remarkable operations in human history: “And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof.” There was no physician standing beside the operating table, no medical equipment, and no human knowledge directing the procedure. The Creator who had formed Adam from the dust now took something from Adam's own body and employed it in the creation of the woman. Scripture records the event as an actual divine work, not a fable invented to provide religious decoration for a marriage ceremony. The same God who formed the man possessed the power to fashion the woman. Genesis 2:22 continues, “And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man.” Every major action belongs to God. He caused the sleep, took the rib, closed the flesh, made the woman, and brought her to Adam. The first marriage was not produced through human ingenuity. Its participants were brought together through the direct activity of the Creator. Adam did not manufacture his own companion, and Eve did not create herself. Both owed their existence to the LORD.

There is a familiar observation concerning this passage that contains a useful moral lesson, provided it is not mistaken for an inspired statement. The woman was formed from Adam's side, not from his head to rule over him or from his foot to be trampled beneath him. That comparison illustrates the importance of companionship, but the biblical argument rests upon the actual words of Genesis, not upon a clever illustration. Scripture identifies the rib and the divine act of creation; it does not supply every sentimental explanation sometimes attached to the event. What the passage unmistakably establishes is the shared human nature of the man and woman. Eve was not created as a different order of being. She came from Adam and was brought to Adam as the companion God had prepared. First Corinthians 11:8 states, “For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man.” Yet the same passage prevents anyone from using the order of creation to deny the mutual

dependence of men and women. Verse 12 declares, “For as the woman is of the man, even so is the man also by the woman; but all things of God.” The Bible states both truths without embarrassment. The first woman came from the man; thereafter men enter the world through women. Anyone who understands both verses will be considerably less impressed with the fellow who thinks his masculinity requires him to belittle the woman through whom God brought him into the world.

The final action in Genesis 2:22 is particularly beautiful in its simplicity: God “brought her unto the man.” There is no complicated description of a ceremonial procession, no invented collection of wedding customs, and no indication that Adam and Eve required the approval of a committee before their relationship could be established. The LORD brought the woman to the man, and Adam received her. This was God's provision, accomplished according to His own wisdom. The passage certainly does not teach that every marriage thereafter will be arranged through an extraordinary act of divine intervention, nor does it promise that every person who desires a spouse will receive one. Such claims go beyond the text. But the original account does establish that marriage is not a trivial human arrangement. God Himself established the relationship and brought its first participants together. It also demonstrates that the woman was not an accidental addition to creation. Eve belonged to God's original design for humanity. She was made with purpose, brought with purpose, and received into a relationship that would become the foundation of human family life. The first household did not begin when Adam discovered that he needed somebody to wash his clothes. It began when God provided the companion He had determined was suitable for the man.

4. Bone of My Bones: The First Marriage and the One-Flesh Union

When Adam saw the woman God had made, he declared in Genesis 2:23, “This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.” Those words are the first recorded human speech concerning marriage, and they reveal recognition rather than rivalry. Adam understood that the woman corresponded to him in a manner no creature of the field could. She was not another animal to be named and placed beneath his dominion. She was of his own flesh and bone. The language emphasizes the shared human nature of the two and prepares the reader for the great statement that follows. There is no indication that Adam regarded Eve as an enemy, an inconvenience, or a competitor for recognition. The first recorded response of man to woman is the acknowledgment of their intimate connection. That ought to embarrass a few people who have spent their lives turning marriage into a contest between the sexes. God did not create the woman so that Adam could have somebody to defeat, nor did He bring her to him so that she could spend her life attempting to overthrow him. Their

relationship was established through the wisdom of God, and the original language points toward union.

Genesis 2:24 then gives the foundational principle: “Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.” Notice that the verse looks beyond Adam and Eve. Adam had no earthly father or mother to leave, yet the declaration establishes a principle for the marriages that would follow. The husband and wife form a new household with a distinctive relationship and responsibility. Leaving does not abolish the command to honour father and mother. It does establish that marriage creates a union that cannot be treated merely as an extension of the parents' household. Cleaving communicates the attachment and faithfulness proper to the marriage relationship. Becoming one flesh identifies a union involving the husband and wife together, not two unrelated individuals maintaining an arrangement for personal convenience. The words are plain enough to survive several thousand years of attempted improvement. Marriage creates obligations that cannot be reduced to financial cooperation, emotional excitement, or a convenient division of domestic labor. It establishes a particular relationship between husband and wife that receives its definition from the Word of God. A wedding may occupy a single afternoon, but Genesis 2:24 concerns the relationship that is supposed to remain when the guests have gone home and the decorations have been taken down.

The expression “one flesh” must not be reduced to a mere figure of speech, but neither should it be turned into mystical nonsense. The husband and wife remain distinct human beings with individual consciences, responsibilities, and accountability before God. Marriage does not erase their personalities or grant either spouse ownership of the other's soul. Yet they are joined in a genuine relationship that includes physical union, domestic partnership, and covenant obligations. The Apostle Paul applies the language of Genesis in Ephesians 5:31, declaring, “For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh.” The New Testament does not discard the Genesis foundation; it confirms it. First Corinthians 6:16 also demonstrates that physical union is a serious matter, not something morally meaningless simply because a person chooses to treat it casually. Scripture distinguishes the honourable marriage relationship from unlawful sexual conduct. The physical aspect belongs within the larger institution established by God. Marriage is not merely a legal contract with religious decorations, and physical intimacy alone does not establish all the responsibilities described in Genesis 2. The one-flesh union must be understood according to the entire biblical account. God established a real relationship with real obligations, and no amount of romantic language can substitute for faithfulness to those obligations.

5. The Home Before the Fall: What Sin Had Not Yet Corrupted

Genesis 2:25 concludes the account of the first marriage with a remarkable statement: “And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.” This verse belongs to the period before human sin entered the world. Adam and Eve were living in innocence. Their relationship had not yet been contaminated by lustful selfishness, deceit, bitterness, suspicion, or the inward corruption that followed disobedience. The statement does not authorize modern people to disregard modesty or pretend that fallen humanity still possesses the innocence of Eden. Genesis 3 demonstrates how quickly their circumstances changed after sin entered. The point is that the original marriage existed without the shame and moral corruption that would later plague mankind. Adam and Eve had no sinful history to conceal, no previous betrayals to explain, and no accumulated resentment to nurse. Their condition was not the product of improved communication techniques or carefully managed emotions. It was the condition of human beings who had not yet sinned against their Creator. To understand the first marriage properly, one must recognize the difference between innocence before the fall and the fallen condition in which every modern marriage now exists.

When Genesis 3 records the entrance of sin, the consequences appear almost immediately in the relationship between the man, the woman, and God. The serpent deceived Eve, and Adam knowingly transgressed the divine command. First Timothy 2:14 distinguishes their participation: “And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression.” Romans 5:12 identifies Adam's responsibility concerning the entrance of sin into the world: “Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin.” Then comes the disgraceful spectacle of Genesis 3:12, where Adam says to God, “The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat.” The man who had previously recognized the woman as bone of his bones now points toward her while answering for his own disobedience. There is a sermon in that contrast. Sin does not merely introduce trouble into society; it corrupts the relationships God established for human good. The first attempt to shift responsibility within the household appears almost as soon as the first sin is confronted. Adam's excuse did not remove his guilt, and Eve's deception did not eliminate her accountability. God dealt with both according to the truth. The human practice of blaming another person for one's own disobedience is not a modern discovery. It is an old family custom that began in Eden.

Genesis 3:16 records consequences directed toward the woman after the fall, including the declaration, “thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee.” This statement must be distinguished from the original creation of Eve in Genesis 2. The existence of the man and woman, their union, and the institution of marriage preceded sin.

The painful conditions introduced through the fall did not constitute the original blessing of marriage. Consequently, a husband cannot take the consequences of sin and turn them into permission to practice cruelty. The New Testament commands husbands to love their wives, not to exploit the miseries introduced by Adam's disobedience. Colossians 3:19 states, “Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them.” The same Bible that establishes order within marriage condemns bitterness and requires godly conduct. Likewise, a wife cannot justify sinful behavior by pointing to the failures of her husband. Both remain accountable to God. The fall explains the presence of conflict, selfishness, suffering, and disorder; it does not excuse them. Sin entered a world in which marriage already existed, and marriage has suffered the consequences ever since. That is why the Christian must never confuse God's original institution with every miserable example produced by fallen human nature. The blueprint was given before the serpent spoke. The damage came when human beings listened to the serpent instead of obeying God.

6. Jesus Christ Settled the Question by Returning to Genesis

When the Lord Jesus Christ addressed marriage in Matthew 19, He did something that deserves serious consideration. He did not begin by asking what the surrounding culture considered acceptable. He did not assemble a collection of popular opinions, compare competing religious customs, and attempt to construct a compromise that everybody could endorse. He went straight to the beginning. Matthew 19:4 records His answer: “Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female,” and the following verse appeals directly to the language of Genesis concerning leaving father and mother and cleaving to one's wife. The Lord treated the account of creation as authoritative history and as the foundation for understanding marriage. That fact alone ought to settle something for a Bible believer. If Jesus Christ appealed to Genesis when explaining marriage, it would be an extraordinary display of arrogance for a professing Christian to dismiss Genesis as an outdated record that must be corrected by modern opinion. The Lord did not apologize for the beginning. He established His teaching upon it. The authority of Genesis was not diminished by the passing of centuries, the development of civilization, or the existence of religious controversy. Christ returned to the original institution because the original institution revealed God's intention.

Matthew 19:6 declares, “Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.” The Lord's words confirm that marriage is more than a private arrangement existing solely by human preference. God established the institution, and the joining of husband and wife possesses a seriousness that must not be treated lightly. Notice also the expression “no more twain, but one flesh.” Two individuals enter marriage and become joined in a relationship that Scripture describes as

one flesh. Their union is not merely a partnership between separate commercial interests. It creates obligations and loyalties that extend beyond the ordinary associations of life. The Lord was addressing a particular controversy in Matthew 19, but His appeal establishes the enduring authority of the creation account. We need not enter the separate questions of divorce and remarriage to recognize the foundation He used. Jesus Christ did not create an entirely new definition of marriage. He directed His hearers to the one God had already given. The remarkable thing about the passage is not its difficulty. It is the determination of fallen humanity to make difficult what the Lord made plain.

Mark 10:6 records the same foundational truth in another form: “But from the beginning of the creation God made them male and female.” Notice that Christ connected the creation of male and female with the beginning of creation itself. He did not treat Adam and Eve as literary inventions whose religious usefulness depended upon ignoring their historical reality. Nor did He present marriage as a temporary social custom that could be replaced whenever human preference required another arrangement. His teaching rests upon the acts of God recorded in Genesis. A Christian who professes to follow Christ cannot consistently reject the authority upon which Christ deliberately based His instruction. That does not mean every tradition surrounding weddings possesses divine authority. Scripture never commands a particular color of wedding dress, a particular ceremony, or an elaborate display of expensive decorations. Such matters belong to human custom. The institution itself, however, belongs to God. The distinction is essential. Men may arrange ceremonies; they do not possess authority to rewrite the creation account. Governments may regulate the civil recognition of marriages; they did not invent the relationship described in Eden. Churches may teach married believers their responsibilities; they did not manufacture the foundation of those responsibilities. The Lord Jesus Christ did not send His hearers into the future to discover the meaning of marriage. He sent them backward to Genesis to recover what God had already established.

7. Marriage Is Honourable in All: God's Institution in a Fallen World

Hebrews 13:4 makes a declaration that strikes with equal force against two opposite errors: “Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.” Some religious systems have treated marriage as though it were spiritually inferior to remaining unmarried, while worldly thinking has often reduced it to a temporary arrangement that may be discarded whenever another relationship appears more attractive. The verse corrects both extremes. Marriage is honourable. Its proper physical relationship is not unclean. Yet the same passage warns that sexual immorality remains subject to divine judgment. God does not condemn what He established, and He does not approve the corruption of what He established. The Bible makes no apology for

marriage, nor does it flatter the individual who dishonours it. Notice also that the verse does not describe marriage as an institution reserved exclusively for New Testament Christians. Marriage existed long before the Church was revealed as the body of Christ. Abraham was married. Isaac was married. Jacob was married. Marriage belongs to the creation order and concerns human society generally. Its honourable character does not depend upon whether every person entering it understands the Gospel. The institution is God's even when the participants are ignorant of the God who established it.

At the same time, marriage must never be confused with salvation. A man is not justified before God because he has a wife, and a woman is not regenerated because she has entered a lawful marriage. Ephesians 2:8–9 declares, “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.” The marriage ceremony cannot wash away sin, produce the new birth, or place anybody into the body of Christ. Those blessings belong to salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ, not to the institution of marriage. This distinction becomes particularly important when examining Ephesians 5:32, where Paul writes, “This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.” The relationship between husband and wife is employed to illustrate the relationship between Christ and His Church. But Adam and Eve were not members of the New Testament body of Christ in Genesis 2, and the marriage ceremony is not an ordinance that places sinners into that body. The historical foundation must be distinguished from the later doctrinal revelation. Genesis records the first marriage; Ephesians reveals the spiritual significance of marriage in connection with Christ and the Church. The Scripture develops the doctrine without contradicting its foundation. That is how a Bible ought to be studied: line upon line, passage compared with passage, and the differences preserved rather than flattened into a religious mixture.

There is also a practical warning in Hebrews 13:4 that must not be overlooked. Marriage is called honourable, but honouring marriage involves more than praising it publicly while disregarding its obligations privately. A husband who boasts about biblical marriage while treating his wife with bitterness has not demonstrated obedience merely because his doctrinal vocabulary is correct. A wife who praises the sanctity of marriage while practicing dishonesty or unfaithfulness cannot excuse her conduct by pointing to the institution itself. God did not establish marriage as a decorative religious symbol to be displayed before the public while its responsibilities are neglected behind closed doors. The honour belongs to the institution, and the participants are responsible to conduct themselves accordingly. The warning concerning whoremongers and adulterers reminds us that God distinguishes the lawful marriage relationship from sexual immorality. A wedding ring does not sanctify every action performed by the person wearing it, and a marriage certificate does not provide immunity from divine accountability. The Christian must learn to honour the

marriage relationship by following God's commands rather than merely repeating God's terminology. Scripture does not call marriage honourable so that believers can admire the word. It calls marriage honourable because the institution deserves to be treated with the seriousness established by its Author.

Conclusion: The Home Begins Where God Begins

When we return to Genesis and examine the first marriage without the clutter of modern controversy, the foundational truths are remarkably clear. God created the man. God created the woman. God declared that the man's solitary condition was not good. God fashioned the woman from Adam's rib and brought her unto him. Adam recognized her as bone of his bones and flesh of his flesh, and Scripture established the principle that a man shall leave his father and mother, cleave unto his wife, and become one flesh with her. None of those truths originated in human legislation or religious tradition. They came directly from the Creator. The institution preceded the fall, survived the entrance of sin, and was affirmed by the Lord Jesus Christ when He appealed to the beginning. The writer of Hebrews declared marriage honourable, and the Apostle Paul later revealed its significance as a picture of Christ and the Church. From Genesis through the New Testament, the foundation remains consistent. Marriage is not a cultural invention whose meaning must be determined by whichever generation happens to possess the loudest collection of opinions. It is an institution established by God, and the Christian who desires to understand it must begin with His Word. The first home had no human architect, no religious bureaucracy, and no fashionable theory holding it together. It had something infinitely greater: the authority of Almighty God.

That divine origin does not mean every marriage will be easy, nor does it suggest that Christian husbands and wives are immune to the failures that characterize fallen human nature. Adam and Eve themselves demonstrate how quickly sin can damage the relationships God established. Before the fall, Adam recognized the woman as flesh of his flesh. After the fall, he attempted to explain his disobedience by pointing toward the woman God had given him. That contrast exposes the real problem. Sin turns companionship into accusation, responsibility into excuse-making, authority into selfishness, and affection into an opportunity for personal advantage. But none of those distortions requires us to abandon the institution. They require us to recognize the depravity of fallen humanity and the necessity of obedience to God's Word. A Christian husband must not use the Bible to excuse his sins, and a Christian wife must not disregard the Scriptures because another person has abused their teaching. Both must submit themselves to the Lord who established the relationship and who will judge their conduct. The Word of God provides no excuse for cruelty, deceit, unfaithfulness, or selfish

manipulation. Marriage does not suspend the Christian's responsibility to walk in holiness. If anything, it provides one of the most searching places in ordinary life where that responsibility must be demonstrated. A man may convince a congregation that he is a fine Christian with a polished testimony on Sunday morning; his conduct toward his wife during the rest of the week may reveal considerably more about his obedience to Scripture.

The first lesson in Marriage by the Book must therefore end where it began: with God standing at the center of His own institution. Before discussing the husband's responsibilities, the wife's conduct, the importance of companionship, the obligations of love, the handling of disagreements, or the ordinary difficulties of maintaining a household, we must settle the question of authority. Does the Word of God possess the right to define marriage, or must its instructions be adjusted whenever human preferences become inconvenient? For a Bible believer, that question should not require a committee meeting. Psalm 127:1 declares, “Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it.” The verse concerns dependence upon the LORD, and its principle applies with particular force to the Christian home. Human effort, financial planning, pleasant surroundings, and carefully arranged routines cannot replace obedience to God. A house may be beautifully furnished and spiritually bankrupt. A marriage may be admired by the public while its occupants privately disregard every instruction the Scriptures provide. The answer is not another religious slogan pasted upon the wall. It is submission to the authority of the Book. God established marriage before man invented the excuses now employed to disregard it, and His Word remains the final authority upon its meaning and responsibilities. The Christian who wants a marriage governed by the Bible must begin by believing what the Bible says about the marriage God created. When Almighty God established the first home, He did not ask humanity to improve His design. He gave humanity a design worth obeying.

2 of 10 – Marriage by the Book – Leaving, Cleaving, and Becoming One Flesh

Key Passage: Genesis 2:24 (KJV)

“Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.” — Genesis 2:24

Introduction

There are few sentences in the entire Bible that contain more instruction concerning marriage than the twenty-fourth verse of Genesis chapter two. In twenty-two English words, Almighty God establishes the foundation upon which every lawful marriage is supposed to

stand. He does not begin with romantic excitement, financial arrangements, elaborate ceremonies, expensive receptions, or the compatibility examinations so beloved by modern experts. He begins with three unmistakable actions: leaving, cleaving, and becoming one flesh. The simplicity of those words is enough to make the average modern marriage expert nervous. After all, an entire industry has been constructed around explaining human relationships, and here comes Moses with one sentence that reaches deeper than a library of fashionable theories. The difficulty is not that God failed to communicate. The difficulty is that fallen human beings have developed an extraordinary talent for complicating whatever God has made plain. Marriage is not a religious hobby that two people undertake until they find something more entertaining. It is an institution established by the Creator, involving a new relationship, a new household, and obligations that cannot be discarded merely because the wedding photographs have lost their shine.

The context makes the command even more remarkable. Adam had no earthly father or mother. There were no grandparents arranging a wedding, no relatives offering unsolicited advice, and no competing households demanding his attention. Yet Genesis 2:24 declares, “Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.” The statement reaches beyond the immediate circumstances of Adam and Eve to establish a pattern for the generations that would follow. The first man received his wife directly from the LORD, and the Holy Ghost recorded the principle that would govern the marriages of their descendants. Notice that the Scripture does not say a man shall abandon his parents, despise his family, surrender his responsibility, or turn his wife into an object of worship. Neither does it say that the wife shall become the personal property of her husband. The language describes a new union established under divine authority. Two individuals who previously belonged to separate family arrangements now enter a relationship possessing its own obligations. The wedding may be public, but the covenant reaches into the private conduct of everyday life.

The Lord Jesus Christ repeated this foundation in Matthew 19:5–6, declaring, “For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.” The Apostle Paul repeated it again in Ephesians 5:31, connecting the marriage relationship with the tremendous doctrinal truth concerning Christ and His Church. Malachi 2:14 describes the wife as “thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant.” From the creation account, through the prophets, into the earthly ministry of Christ, and finally into the doctrinal instructions given to the Church, the seriousness of marriage remains unmistakable. The particulars of those passages must be rightly divided, but their testimony concerning marital faithfulness cannot be dismissed. God never presented marriage as a convenient arrangement requiring loyalty only when

circumstances remained pleasant. A wedding ceremony may last thirty minutes, but the promises made there reach into years of ordinary responsibilities, unexpected disappointments, and daily decisions. A marriage is not measured by how beautifully two people begin together, but by how faithfully they continue after the excitement of beginning has passed.

1. The Three Commands That Establish a New Household

The first thing to notice about Genesis 2:24 is the order of its language. The man is instructed to leave, then to cleave, and the resulting union is described as one flesh. These are not three unrelated suggestions gathered together for convenience. They form a connected declaration explaining the establishment of marriage. The word “Therefore” points directly backward to the creation of Eve and Adam's acknowledgment that she was bone of his bones and flesh of his flesh. God had made the woman suitable for the man, brought her unto him, and established the relationship from which the marriage principle follows. The foundation is divine creation, not human invention. Adam did not discover marriage while experimenting with social customs. God provided his wife, and Scripture explained the significance of the union. The man leaves an existing family arrangement, cleaves to his wife, and enters the one-flesh relationship ordained by God. The order is instructive because a new marriage cannot properly function while its participants refuse to recognize that a new household has been established.

The wording also prevents several foolish conclusions that have troubled Christian homes. Leaving father and mother does not mean declaring war upon one's parents. Cleaving to a wife does not mean surrendering personal accountability to God. Becoming one flesh does not mean that two people lose their individual identities, consciences, or responsibilities. The Bible does not teach that marriage transforms two sinners into one infallible creature who can no longer make a mistake. If that were the case, the average household would have discovered perfection shortly after the honeymoon, and every married Christian knows better. The verse describes the relationship created by marriage, not the elimination of individual personhood. A husband remains responsible for his own conduct, and a wife remains responsible for hers. Romans 14:12 declares, “So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.” That principle does not disappear at the wedding altar. God joins two people in marriage without transferring His own authority to either spouse.

There is an important distinction between the institution of marriage and the customs surrounding its celebration. A couple may exchange rings, employ a minister, invite witnesses, hold a reception, and observe traditions that have developed over centuries. Those customs may be appropriate and meaningful, but they are not the foundation upon which Genesis establishes marriage. The LORD did not say that Adam and Eve became

husband and wife because they followed a particular ceremonial arrangement. He established their relationship by His own authority. In a fallen society, public recognition and lawful procedures serve important purposes, and Christians should not use Genesis as an excuse for deception, secret arrangements, or disregard for legitimate civil obligations. Nevertheless, the essential meaning of marriage cannot be reduced to the ceremony. A man can spend a fortune upon flowers, decorations, music, and photographs while remaining ignorant of the first command God gave concerning his new household. The wedding is an event; the marriage is an obligation. Confusing the two is like admiring the front door while allowing the foundation to collapse.

2. Leaving Father and Mother Without Dishonouring Them

The first expression is “leave his father and his mother.” This declaration establishes a necessary change in family relationships when a man marries. Before marriage, a child grows up within the household established by his parents, receiving instruction, correction, provision, and guidance according to his stage of life. Marriage creates a new household with a different order of responsibility. The husband is no longer merely a son living under the ordinary arrangements of his father's home. He now possesses responsibilities toward his own wife and household. This does not require every newly married couple to possess an expensive house or occupy a dwelling hundreds of miles from their relatives. The issue is not the number of miles separating two addresses. It is the recognition of a new relationship. A husband and wife may live near their parents, or under circumstances requiring shared accommodations, without surrendering their proper responsibilities. But if every important household decision must receive permission from somebody's mother or father, the couple has not fully understood the principle. You cannot establish a new household while allowing the old household to retain the steering wheel.

The command to leave must never be twisted into permission to dishonour parents. Exodus 20:12 declares, “Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.” That command was given to Israel under the law, with a particular promise connected to the land, and its original setting must not be erased. Nevertheless, the Apostle Paul repeats the command concerning parental honour in Ephesians 6:2, making its moral responsibility plain to Christian readers. A man does not cease to owe respect to his parents merely because he has become somebody's husband. A woman does not receive permission to treat her parents with contempt because she has entered marriage. First Timothy 5:4 also speaks of children and descendants showing piety at home and requiting their parents. Marriage changes family responsibilities without abolishing gratitude, respect, or reasonable care. The Christian who uses Genesis 2:24 to

justify neglecting elderly parents has not rightly divided the Scriptures. He has simply selected one passage while pretending the others have disappeared.

The difficulty comes when parental influence becomes parental interference. A father may offer counsel without attempting to govern every decision his married son makes. A mother may love her daughter without demanding a private report concerning every disagreement between daughter and husband. Parents can become a blessing to a young marriage through prayer, wisdom, encouragement, and appropriate assistance. They can also become a continual source of confusion when they refuse to recognize that their children have established another household. Proverbs 11:14 says, “Where no counsel is, the people fall: but in the multitude of counsellors there is safety.” Wise counsel is valuable, but counsel and control are two different things. A married couple should neither despise godly advice nor surrender every responsibility to the loudest relative in the family. Some people have confused parental honour with perpetual parental government. They appear convinced that a wedding creates two married adults while leaving the parents in charge of the household. Genesis teaches otherwise. Honouring your parents does not require allowing them to occupy the place that belongs to your husband or wife.

3. Cleaving Means Holding Fast When Feelings Change

The second expression in Genesis 2:24 is “shall cleave unto his wife.” That word deserves more attention than it ordinarily receives. Cleaving describes attachment, joining, and holding fast. It does not describe a casual association maintained until something more attractive appears. The Bible does not present a husband as a customer examining a product that may be returned when it ceases to satisfy his preferences. Nor does it present a wife as a temporary companion whose usefulness expires whenever life's circumstances become difficult. The marriage relationship carries obligations that extend beyond the changing feelings of its participants. Emotional affection is a wonderful blessing, but affection must be governed by the faithfulness that Scripture requires. A person who confuses excitement with commitment will eventually discover that excitement is a poor foundation for a lifetime of responsibility. The word cleave does not suggest an attachment maintained only when everything runs smoothly. It identifies the joining of husband and wife in the relationship God has established.

The seriousness of cleaving becomes especially apparent when ordinary difficulties enter the household. The husband discovers that his wife is a real human being rather than the perfect creature he imagined during courtship. The wife discovers that her husband possesses weaknesses that were not prominently advertised during their engagement. Bills arrive. Work becomes exhausting. Children require attention. Sickness interrupts carefully arranged plans. Disagreements develop over matters neither spouse anticipated. These

circumstances do not necessarily prove that the marriage was a mistake. They demonstrate that two fallen individuals must fulfill their obligations within a fallen world. Colossians 3:13 instructs believers, “Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.” That command concerns Christian conduct generally, but its application within marriage is unmistakable. A husband and wife who cannot admit wrongdoing, receive correction, exercise patience, or forgive genuine offenses will discover that pride can make a home miserable regardless of its outward appearance. The marriage vow is not tested when everything agrees with it. It is tested when obedience becomes more costly than convenience.

Cleaving, however, must never be used as an excuse for cruelty, intimidation, or continued wrongdoing. The Bible commands faithfulness, but it does not command a husband to become a tyrant or a wife to endure physical danger without seeking protection. Ephesians 5:25 commands, “Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it.” Colossians 3:19 adds, “Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them.” These passages place serious obligations upon the husband and expose the hypocrisy of any man who quotes Genesis 2:24 while disregarding the New Testament commandments governing his own behavior. Likewise, the wife remains accountable to God for truthfulness, faithfulness, and godly conduct. Biblical cleaving includes loyalty, but loyalty is not a license for sin. Reconciliation requires more than demanding that the injured person pretend nothing happened. Genuine repentance, truthful dealing, accountability, and changed conduct matter. The fellow who wants the privileges of a covenant without its responsibilities is not defending biblical marriage. He is attempting to purchase obedience with counterfeit Scripture.

4. One Flesh: More Than a Physical Relationship

The third expression is the culmination of the passage: “and they shall be one flesh.” The language must be allowed to mean what Scripture says without being diminished or exaggerated. Marriage establishes a relationship between a man and a woman that involves their physical union, their shared household, and the obligations of their joined life. The man and woman remain two persons, yet they are no longer unrelated individuals whose interests can be pursued without consideration for the other. Matthew 19:6 declares, “Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh.” The Lord Jesus Christ took the original statement of Genesis and confirmed its enduring authority. The marriage relationship cannot be adequately described as two people sharing furniture, splitting expenses, and occasionally expressing affection. They have entered a union that God Himself established. Their decisions, conduct, faithfulness, and responsibilities

necessarily affect one another. The world may prefer to describe marriage as an arrangement between independent consumers, but Scripture presents something considerably more serious than a business partnership with wedding rings.

The physical aspect of the one-flesh relationship must not be dismissed. First Corinthians 6:16 states, “What? know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body? for two, saith he, shall be one flesh.” Paul's warning demonstrates the moral seriousness of physical union, but the context is a warning against fornication, not a declaration that every unlawful physical act constitutes a lawful marriage. A person must distinguish the physical significance of sexual union from the entire marriage covenant established by God. Hebrews 13:4 declares, “Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.” The physical relationship between husband and wife belongs within honourable marriage, while sexual immorality remains condemned by Scripture. In 1 Corinthians 7:3–5, Paul also establishes reciprocal marital responsibilities, not a charter for one spouse to demand intimacy through force or disregard for the other's well-being. The language is mutual, and Christian love governs the conduct of both. God established the marriage bed as part of a holy relationship, not as a playground for selfishness or a weapon for household warfare.

The one-flesh relationship also exposes the foolishness of living as though marriage changes nothing beyond a person's social title. Some individuals marry while continuing to make every important decision as though they were entirely independent of the person they have joined. Money is concealed, commitments are made secretly, outside relationships receive greater attention than the spouse, and personal preferences are treated as though they possess divine authority. That arrangement may produce two people occupying the same building, but it does not demonstrate obedience to the principles of Genesis. Ephesians 5:28 declares, “So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself.” The Apostle's language connects the husband's obligation to the reality of the marital union. A man who deliberately harms his wife is acting contrary to the very relationship he claims to honour. Likewise, the wife must recognize that her conduct affects the shared household. One flesh does not mean one person possesses unlimited authority to disregard the other. It means marriage establishes a union in which selfish independence must yield to the responsibilities God has appointed.

5. The Wife of Thy Covenant: When God Becomes the Witness

Malachi 2:14 introduces language that ought to make every careless husband examine his conduct. The prophet declares, “Yet ye say, Wherefore? Because the LORD hath been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, against whom thou hast dealt

treacherously: yet is she thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant." The historical setting must be preserved. Malachi was addressing the people of Israel under the Mosaic covenant, exposing their religious corruption, unfaithfulness, and disregard for the LORD. This was not an epistle written to the New Testament body of Christ. Nevertheless, the passage reveals an enduring truth concerning the seriousness of marital promises. God identifies Himself as a witness and condemns treacherous conduct toward the wife. The fact that a man could continue participating in religious activities while acting unfaithfully at home did not impress the LORD. Religious performance cannot conceal domestic wickedness from the eyes of God. A man may persuade his friends that he is respectable, but Heaven is not required to accept the testimony of his public reputation.

Notice the two descriptions used in the verse: "thy companion" and "the wife of thy covenant." The first points toward the personal relationship; the second identifies the solemn obligation. Marriage involves companionship and covenant together. One without the other produces a distorted understanding of the institution. A person may speak constantly about affection while behaving as though promises are optional. Another may insist upon the seriousness of the marriage arrangement while neglecting every expression of kindness, consideration, and companionship. Scripture refuses to separate faithfulness from the relationship to which that faithfulness belongs. Proverbs 2:17 describes the strange woman as one "Which forsaketh the guide of her youth, and forgetteth the covenant of her God." Again, covenant language reveals that marriage is not treated as a passing emotional agreement. The Bible does not teach that affection is unimportant, but it will not permit affection to become the only measure of obligation. Feelings may explain why two people wanted to marry; covenant faithfulness governs what they promised to do after they married.

Malachi's warning also reveals the absurdity of attempting to purchase God's approval through outward religion while practicing deliberate wrongdoing at home. Malachi 2:13 describes tears and weeping associated with offerings, while the following verse exposes treachery toward the wife. The problem was not that the LORD had suddenly become indifferent to religious devotion. The problem was that the worshippers wanted acceptance without repentance. Their ceremonies remained, but their conduct contradicted their profession. That danger has not disappeared merely because the dispensation has changed. A Christian husband may carry a King James Bible, defend sound doctrine, and speak loudly about the sanctity of marriage while treating his wife with contempt. His religious vocabulary does not transform disobedience into righteousness. A Christian wife may profess godliness while practicing deception and unfaithfulness. Her public testimony does not excuse private sin. God sees beyond appearances. The marriage covenant cannot be protected by impressive words from people who refuse to practice them. The LORD is

not deceived by a religious performance on Sunday when treachery has occupied the house from Monday through Saturday.

6. Divided Loyalties: When Outsiders Begin Governing the Marriage

The command to leave and cleave necessarily affects the place of outsiders in the married household. Parents, siblings, friends, employers, and fellow church members may all have legitimate relationships with a husband and wife, but none should ordinarily displace the obligations of the marriage itself. The problem begins when a spouse repeatedly seeks approval from outsiders while disregarding the person to whom marital faithfulness is owed. Some husbands allow their parents to determine matters that properly belong to the husband and wife. Some wives report every private disagreement to friends who are eager to provide an opinion but have no responsibility for living with its consequences. Others allow their employment, social interests, or personal ambitions to consume the attention owed to their household. Genesis 2:24 establishes a union that must be given its proper place. This does not require isolation from relatives or the rejection of wise counsel. It requires recognizing that the marriage is not a committee governed by every interested spectator. A household cannot sail a straight course when everybody on the shore has been handed a steering wheel.

The Bible also provides instruction concerning the destructive use of words. Proverbs 11:13 declares, “A talebearer revealeth secrets: but he that is of a faithful spirit concealeth the matter.” Proverbs 16:28 adds, “A froward man soweth strife: and a whisperer separateth chief friends.” These warnings are particularly relevant when private marital difficulties become entertainment for outsiders. A husband who publicly ridicules his wife is not demonstrating masculine strength. A wife who continually humiliates her husband before relatives or acquaintances is not displaying biblical wisdom. Both are inviting unnecessary damage into the relationship. Yet discretion must not be confused with concealing abuse, criminal conduct, or serious wrongdoing. Scripture never requires a person to remain silent when protection, lawful intervention, or trustworthy assistance is necessary. The distinction is between seeking legitimate help and spreading private matters for revenge, gossip, or attention. A faithful spouse does not recruit an audience every time an argument occurs. The home needs honesty and wise counsel where appropriate, not a permanent collection of spectators waiting to cast their votes.

Even Christian service must be conducted with proper regard for the responsibilities of marriage. There are legitimate occasions when ministry requires sacrifice, travel, unusual hours, and difficult decisions. The Apostle Paul understood the demands of serving the Lord, yet he also gave extensive instruction concerning the conduct of husbands and wives. First Timothy 3:4 speaks of a man “One that ruleth well his own house, having his

children in subjection with all gravity," in the context of qualifications for church leadership. Verse 5 asks, "For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?" The immediate subject is the qualification of a bishop, but the principle exposes the foolishness of religious activity that becomes an excuse for neglecting the household. A man cannot continually abandon his responsibilities at home and expect everybody to admire his public usefulness. Nor should a wife be compelled to bear every family burden while her husband congratulates himself for being busy in religious work. Service to God does not provide a license to disregard God's instructions concerning marriage. The LORD did not establish the home so that a man could neglect it in the name of serving the One who established it.

7. The Great Mystery: Marriage and the Relationship of Christ to His Church

Ephesians 5:31 repeats the foundational declaration from Genesis: "For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh." The next verse reveals an extraordinary doctrinal connection: "This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church." The Apostle Paul takes the marriage institution established in Eden and connects it with the relationship between the Lord Jesus Christ and His Church. This does not mean that Adam understood the full New Testament revelation concerning the body of Christ when Eve was brought unto him. The mystery concerning Christ and the Church was revealed in its proper doctrinal setting, and Scripture must not be forced backward as though every Old Testament saint possessed the complete revelation later given through Paul. Nevertheless, the divine Author of Scripture knew the end from the beginning. The marriage relationship established in Genesis provides an illustration of spiritual truths revealed in Ephesians. The foundation remains historical and literal, while the New Testament unveils a greater doctrinal significance.

The comparison places serious obligations upon Christian husbands. Ephesians 5:25 declares, "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it." That command ought to silence the fellow who believes biblical headship consists primarily of telling everybody else what to do. Christ's love for the Church was demonstrated through sacrifice, not selfish indulgence. The Apostle continues in verse 29, "For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church." A husband is commanded to nourish and cherish his wife, treating her with the care appropriate to the one-flesh union. The passage also instructs wives concerning their responsibilities, but neither spouse receives permission to use the other's obligations as an excuse for personal disobedience. The husband is accountable for his conduct, and the wife for hers. A man who demands respect while refusing to demonstrate

Christlike love has missed the force of the passage. Headship is not a throne upon which a selfish man sits; it is a responsibility under which a Christian man must answer to God.

The comparison must also be rightly divided concerning salvation. The marriage of a man and woman does not save either participant, and the relationship between Christ and the Church cannot be reduced to the ordinary conditions of earthly marriage. Ephesians 2:8–9 declares that salvation is by grace through faith, “Not of works, lest any man should boast.” The believer's standing in Christ rests upon the finished work of the Saviour, not upon human marriage vows or domestic performance. Furthermore, the Church's relationship with Christ involves spiritual realities that earthly marriages illustrate only in part. The illustration must never be allowed to replace the doctrine. Yet the practical force is tremendous. A Christian marriage ought to display sacrificial love, faithfulness, consideration, and godly order because the relationship points toward something greater than itself. Paul concludes in Ephesians 5:33, “Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband.” The Apostle brings the great mystery directly into the ordinary household. The doctrine reaches Heaven, but the obedience must be practiced at home.

Conclusion

The command of Genesis 2:24 is not difficult to locate, and its fundamental meaning is not hidden behind an elaborate system of religious mysteries. “Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.” The man leaves the former household relationship, cleaves to the wife whom he has married, and enters the union God established. Those words explain why marriage creates responsibilities that are different from ordinary friendships, family associations, business arrangements, and temporary companionships. They do not abolish parental honour, individual accountability, or the need for godly counsel. They do establish a relationship that must receive its proper place. The wife is not an accessory added to a man's existing life without affecting his obligations. The husband is not merely a financial contributor who happens to share accommodations with a woman. Marriage brings two people into a covenant relationship in which both are accountable to God. The man who wants the benefits of marriage without its obligations is like a fellow who wants the harvest while refusing to plant, water, or maintain the field. He may admire the picture, but he has no intention of doing the work.

The Scripture also exposes the emptiness of promises that are never followed by obedience. Malachi identifies the wife as “thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant,” and the LORD condemns treacherous dealing within that relationship. The Lord Jesus Christ confirms the one-flesh union in Matthew 19, and the Apostle Paul repeats the

Genesis foundation while instructing Christian husbands and wives in Ephesians 5. The testimony is consistent even though the passages occupy different historical and doctrinal settings. Marriage is serious because God established it, not because human beings have developed elaborate ceremonies for celebrating it. A husband should be faithful when his wife is present and when she is absent. A wife should be truthful when her husband is listening and when he is not. Both should refuse the pride, bitterness, deceit, and selfishness that destroy fellowship within the home. Their promises must govern conduct long after the public ceremony has ended. A covenant is not honoured by remembering what was said at the wedding; it is honoured by practicing what was promised when nobody is watching. The marriage that possesses public admiration but lacks private faithfulness has confused appearances with obedience.

Every Christian marriage must finally come under the authority of the Word of God. The husband cannot rewrite Genesis to accommodate his selfishness, and the wife cannot discard its obligations whenever obedience becomes inconvenient. Parents must respect the new household without surrendering their proper place of honour. Friends must not become instruments of unnecessary strife. Christian service must not become an excuse for household neglect. Physical intimacy must remain within the honourable relationship God established, and the responsibilities of husband and wife must be governed by the commandments given in Scripture. Most importantly, the Christian must remember that marriage is not sustained by human promises divorced from obedience to God. Psalm 127:1 declares, “Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it.” A beautifully decorated house may still contain a miserable marriage, while a modest home governed by the Word of God may possess riches that money cannot purchase. The foundation is not the size of the property, the quality of the furniture, or the approval of surrounding society. It is the authority of the LORD and the faithful discharge of the responsibilities He has established. Leaving establishes the household. Cleaving demonstrates the commitment. Becoming one flesh reveals the union. And obedience to Almighty God gives that union the direction it was intended to possess.

3 of 10 – Marriage by the Book – An Help Meet for Him: Companionship Without Competition

Key Passage: Genesis 2:18 (KJV)

“And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him.” — Genesis 2:18

Introduction

There is something fundamentally wrong with the modern notion that a husband and wife are supposed to spend their married lives competing for the highest position in the household. The world has managed to turn nearly every relationship into a contest, and now it wants the Christian home to resemble a wrestling match in which two people fight for control while calling the struggle equality, independence, or personal fulfillment. One would almost think that Almighty God established marriage so that two human beings could spend the next forty years attempting to defeat one another. But when we open the King James Bible and return to Genesis 2:18, we discover an entirely different arrangement. “And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him.” Notice what God did not say. He did not announce that Adam required an opponent, a competitor, a domestic employee, or somebody to blame whenever things went wrong. He said Adam needed an help meet for him. The first marriage was established upon divine wisdom, not human rivalry. The woman was created to be a companion suited to the man, sharing his life within the order God had established. God did not create marriage to provide two people with an enemy living under the same roof.

The circumstances surrounding that declaration are extraordinary. Adam was living in a perfect environment, surrounded by the uncorrupted creation of God, possessing meaningful work, enjoying fellowship with his Creator, and experiencing none of the misery introduced by sin. There was no death, sickness, financial hardship, domestic bitterness, or sinful temptation contaminating his circumstances. Yet the LORD declared that something was not good: the man was alone. That statement destroys the foolish assumption that perfect surroundings automatically provide complete human companionship. Adam had a garden that no landscape architect could improve, employment that no labor union needed to negotiate, and living conditions that every modern real-estate developer would advertise as paradise. Nevertheless, God identified a need that the garden itself could not satisfy. The answer was not a larger property, a more impressive occupation, or an additional collection of animals. God made the woman. The Creator understood that human companionship involved something more than occupying the same geographical location as other living creatures. Adam required someone corresponding to his own human nature, capable of sharing the responsibilities and fellowship of the life God had given him.

That original arrangement exposes two opposite errors that continue to damage Christian homes. On one side stands the man who imagines that biblical headship entitles him to command his wife like an employee, dismiss her judgment, ignore her concerns, and measure her value according to how efficiently she satisfies his personal preferences. On

the other stands the rebellious notion that every distinction between husband and wife must be abolished because cooperation is supposedly impossible wherever responsibilities differ. Both errors miss the simplicity of Genesis. God established order without making companionship impossible, and He provided companionship without abolishing order. The woman was not created as an inferior species, and the man was not placed beneath her authority merely because God declared that he needed help. These truths must be examined according to Scripture, not according to the latest argument circulating through an increasingly confused society. The Christian home should be governed by the Word of God rather than by pride dressed up as principle. A marriage becomes a battlefield when two people become more interested in defending their importance than fulfilling their responsibilities.

1. It Is Not Good That the Man Should Be Alone

Genesis 2:18 begins with a declaration from the LORD Himself: “It is not good that the man should be alone.” The timing is significant. Genesis 1 repeatedly describes God's creation as good, and Genesis 1:31 declares, “And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good.” Genesis 2 supplies further details concerning the creation of mankind, including the circumstances preceding the formation of Eve. The declaration that Adam's solitary condition was not good identifies something that God intended to address before the original creation arrangement was complete. It does not describe a defect in God's workmanship. Adam was created exactly as God intended, but the Creator had not yet provided the companion who would correspond to him. The need was identified by the LORD, not discovered through Adam's dissatisfaction. There is a considerable difference between divine provision and human complaint. God was not correcting a mistake. He was completing an arrangement that He had purposed from the beginning.

The declaration also teaches that companionship is not an invention of fallen humanity. God established the first marriage before sin entered the world. Adam did not require a wife because he had developed sinful habits, because he needed somebody to restrain his wickedness, or because he had failed to discover personal satisfaction in his employment. The need for a suitable companion belonged to God's original design for the human family. Nevertheless, Genesis 2:18 must not be twisted into a command requiring every individual to marry. First Corinthians 7:7 declares, “But every man hath his proper gift of God, one after this manner, and another after that.” Paul recognizes that unmarried life can be appropriate for some believers. Adam's circumstances established the original marriage institution; they do not condemn every unmarried Christian as spiritually incomplete. A man can be complete in Christ without possessing a wife. Marriage is honourable, but it is not a requirement for salvation, holiness, or Christian usefulness.

Genesis 2:19–20 records Adam naming the living creatures brought before him, concluding with the remarkable statement, “but for Adam there was not found an help meet for him.” The animals possessed life, but none corresponded to Adam as a suitable human companion. He could exercise the dominion assigned to him, observe the creatures, and name them according to God's arrangement, but he could not find among them the woman God intended to provide. No matter how intelligent, useful, or affectionate an animal might be, it was not a wife. The LORD did not give Adam another occupation to occupy his evenings. He created a human companion. Modern society may manufacture endless substitutes for meaningful relationships, but entertainment cannot become a covenant companion, and possessions cannot return the affection of a wife. There are homes filled with expensive furnishings whose occupants scarcely speak to one another. A man may possess everything money can purchase and still neglect the one relationship God established to be more valuable than his possessions.

2. An Help Meet for Him: Understanding What God Actually Said

The expression “an help meet for him” deserves careful attention because careless teaching has attached ideas to those words that the passage itself never establishes. The word meet describes suitability or fitness for the purpose intended. God was providing a helper corresponding to the man, someone appropriate to the nature and responsibilities of human life. Eve was not an animal selected from the field, nor was she an identical reproduction of Adam. She was a woman, possessing the same human nature while remaining distinct from the man. The language identifies a relationship of correspondence and assistance. It does not say that Eve was created without intelligence, judgment, spiritual accountability, or personal dignity. Neither does it say that Adam's responsibility disappeared because a companion had been provided. The help was given for the life and work God had established. A helper is not necessarily an inferior, and the person who receives help is not thereby relieved of responsibility.

The Bible itself prevents us from attaching an inherently degrading meaning to the word help. Psalm 46:1 declares, “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.” Psalm 121:2 states, “My help cometh from the LORD, which made heaven and earth.” These passages are not defining the marriage relationship, and they must not be confused with the historical setting of Genesis 2. Nevertheless, they demonstrate that the biblical concept of help does not automatically imply inferiority. Almighty God is called a help, and nobody possessing an ounce of biblical understanding would conclude that the LORD is inferior to the people He assists. The point is not that the wife occupies God's position in the household. The point is that assisting another person does not establish a lower degree of human worth. Service and assistance may be expressions of strength, faithfulness,

wisdom, and genuine love. The world's obsession with measuring human importance according to visible authority has caused people to despise responsibilities that Scripture treats as honourable.

The expression “for him” also matters. Eve was created as a suitable companion for Adam within God's original arrangement. That establishes a distinction in their relationship without authorizing the husband to invent commandments that God never gave. The man had received responsibilities concerning the garden before the woman was created. Genesis 2:15 declares that the LORD placed Adam in Eden “to dress it and to keep it.” God did not create Eve so that Adam could retire from his responsibilities and begin supervising somebody else's labor. Yet neither should the wife be treated as an independent rival whose primary purpose is to demonstrate that she has no need of her husband. Both attitudes corrupt the original arrangement. The man possessed responsibility, and God provided a companion suited to share life with him. Biblical order does not require hostility, and companionship does not require confusion about responsibility. The fellow who thinks having a help meet means having somebody to do everything while he does nothing has mistaken the garden of Eden for a retirement community.

3. The Woman From the Man: One Humanity, Distinct Responsibilities

Genesis 2:21 records the extraordinary manner in which God prepared the woman: “And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof.” The following verse declares, “And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man.” The account presents a direct act of divine creation. God did not commission Adam to manufacture his own companion, and the woman did not emerge through some independent process unrelated to the man. She was formed from Adam's own body through the supernatural operation of the Creator. The significance appears in Adam's response: “This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh.” The woman corresponded to him because she shared his human nature. She was neither another animal nor a lesser kind of creature. She was a human being fashioned by Almighty God.

There is a familiar observation that the woman was formed from Adam's side rather than from his head or his foot. It provides a useful illustration of companionship, provided nobody mistakes the illustration for an inspired explanation of the rib's location. Scripture identifies the rib and records God's action; it does not command readers to invent elaborate doctrines concerning every anatomical detail. What the passage establishes beyond question is the close relationship between man and woman. First Corinthians 11:8 states, “For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man.” Yet verse 12 immediately adds, “For as the woman is of the man, even so is the man also by the woman;

but all things of God." There is the divine balance. The first woman came from the man, and every subsequent man enters the world through a woman. Both remain dependent upon God. That ought to silence some boasting on both sides of the household.

Genesis 2:23 also deserves attention because Adam recognized the woman as belonging to the same human order as himself. He did not respond by questioning whether she possessed sufficient value to deserve his companionship. Nor did the passage describe Eve as a competitor determined to overthrow the man. Their relationship was established before sin introduced rebellion, accusation, selfishness, and domestic strife. Genesis 2:24 then declares that the man shall cleave unto his wife and that they shall be one flesh. The original creation of the woman prepares the foundation for that union. Marriage does not join two enemies who must spend their lives negotiating a ceasefire. It unites two human beings who possess distinct responsibilities within a relationship established by God. The difference between the sexes does not require a difference in human worth. The existence of order does not require contempt. God made the woman from the man, brought her to the man, and established their union; fallen humanity then spent centuries trying to turn their companionship into a contest.

4. Different Responsibilities Without a Household Civil War

The New Testament explains that the divine order of marriage includes distinct responsibilities for husbands and wives. Ephesians 5:23 declares, "For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church." That statement must be received without embarrassment, but it must also be read alongside the command in verse 25: "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it." Biblical headship is inseparable from sacrificial responsibility. The husband cannot demand recognition of his position while ignoring the conduct required of him. Christ did not demonstrate His love for the Church through selfishness, bitterness, or cruelty. The comparison makes the husband's obligations more serious, not less. A man who quotes Ephesians 5:23 while refusing to read the next several verses has not established biblical authority. He has demonstrated the remarkable ability to stop reading precisely where the responsibility becomes personal.

The wife likewise receives instructions concerning her conduct within marriage. Ephesians 5:22 declares, "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord." Colossians 3:18 adds, "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord." These commandments establish order without making the husband a substitute for God. No spouse possesses divine authority to command sin, demand participation in wickedness, or excuse cruelty. A wife remains individually accountable to the LORD, just as her husband does. Submission does not abolish intelligence, godly judgment, wisdom, or

legitimate participation in household decisions. Proverbs 31 portrays a virtuous woman who works diligently, considers property, conducts business, manages household responsibilities, and speaks with wisdom. That is hardly the description of a mindless servant. Her strength operates within the responsibilities entrusted to her rather than in rebellion against God. Biblical submission and capable judgment are not enemies.

The real difficulty often begins when husband and wife turn their distinct responsibilities into competing claims of personal superiority. The man insists that his position entitles him to win every disagreement, while the woman treats every difference of opinion as an opportunity to challenge his authority. Soon the household resembles two political parties conducting a permanent election campaign, except neither candidate ever leaves office. This is not the Christian order presented in Scripture. First Corinthians 11:11 declares, “Nevertheless neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord.” The verse recognizes mutual dependence without abolishing the distinctions established elsewhere in the passage. Both husband and wife possess responsibilities before God, and neither should despise the contribution of the other. The strongest Christian marriage is not the one in which somebody wins every argument. It is the one in which both are more interested in obeying God than defeating each other.

5. Two Are Better Than One: The Strength of Shared Burdens

Ecclesiastes 4:9 declares, “Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour.” The immediate context concerns the advantage of companionship over isolation amid the difficulties and labor of life. Solomon was not writing a New Testament marriage ordinance in this passage, and the verse should not be treated as though its only application concerns husbands and wives. Nevertheless, the principle is directly applicable to the companionship established in Genesis. Two people working together can provide assistance, encouragement, and practical strength that one person alone may lack. Marriage joins a husband and wife who must face the ordinary burdens of life, including work, financial responsibilities, household maintenance, sickness, disappointment, and the care of children. Cooperation does not eliminate these responsibilities, but it changes how they are carried. A married couple ought not to resemble two exhausted laborers competing to see who can carry the heavier burden while refusing to help one another.

Ecclesiastes 4:10 continues, “For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up.” The verse provides a striking picture of the practical advantage of faithful companionship. A husband may experience exhaustion, discouragement, illness, or difficulty that requires the assistance of his wife. A wife may encounter circumstances in which her husband's strength, provision,

encouragement, or practical judgment becomes especially valuable. The responsibility to help is not confined to one direction. A husband who refuses assistance because his pride cannot tolerate admitting weakness is acting foolishly. A wife who interprets every difficulty her husband experiences as an opportunity to demonstrate superiority has likewise missed the principle. The passage concerns assistance in time of need. When one spouse stumbles, the other should offer a hand, not deliver a speech explaining how much more intelligently the fall could have been avoided.

Ecclesiastes 4:12 adds, “And if one prevail against him, two shall withstand him; and a threefold cord is not quickly broken.” The familiar application concerning a husband, wife, and God can serve as an illustration of a marriage governed by the LORD, but the immediate passage does not explicitly identify the three strands as those three persons. Sound exposition must distinguish what the verse states from what an illustration suggests. The underlying principle is clear: united strength is valuable where isolation leaves a person vulnerable. A Christian husband and wife ought to stand together against difficulties rather than allowing difficulties to divide them. This does not mean concealing wrongdoing, refusing correction, or defending sin merely because the offender is a spouse. It means approaching legitimate household burdens as shared responsibilities. When financial trouble appears, cooperation is wiser than accusation. When sickness arrives, faithful service matters more than convenience. The world outside the home supplies enough trouble without a husband and wife manufacturing additional opposition for one another inside it.

6. Finding a Good Thing: Friendship, Affection, and the Ordinary Days

Proverbs 18:22 declares, “Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour of the LORD.” That is a remarkable description of the marriage relationship. The Scripture identifies a wife as a good thing and associates the blessing with the favour of God. It does not describe her as an expensive inconvenience, a necessary burden, or a domestic instrument whose value depends entirely upon how much labor she performs. Nor does the verse guarantee that every marriage will automatically produce happiness regardless of the character and conduct of its participants. Proverbs contains instruction concerning both wise and foolish behavior, and its praise of a wife must be understood alongside its warnings concerning contention and wickedness. Proverbs 19:14 states, “House and riches are the inheritance of fathers: and a prudent wife is from the LORD.” The emphasis upon prudence reminds us that character matters. A husband who receives a faithful wife and then treats her as an inconvenience has demonstrated remarkable ingratitude toward God's provision.

The companionship of marriage must be cultivated through the ordinary activities of life. Proverbs 5:18 instructs the husband, “Let thy fountain be blessed: and rejoice with the wife of thy youth.” In its context, the passage warns against sexual immorality and directs the man toward faithfulness and delight within his own marriage. Yet the command to rejoice is worth considering beyond the wedding ceremony. A husband should not reserve every pleasant word, cheerful expression, and demonstration of consideration for strangers while giving his wife nothing but criticism and exhaustion. Neither should a wife speak respectfully to everybody outside the home while treating her husband with perpetual contempt. Affection is not strengthened by neglect. Friendship does not flourish where two people refuse to spend meaningful time together. The husband who can discuss business, politics, sports, and church affairs for hours but cannot maintain a conversation with his wife ought to reconsider his priorities. A marriage can survive the absence of expensive entertainment; it suffers when companionship itself becomes an occasional visitor.

Time is one of the clearest expressions of personal priorities. Children require attention, employment demands effort, and Christian service may involve genuine sacrifice. None of those responsibilities should become an excuse for allowing the marriage relationship to wither through continual neglect. First Corinthians 7:33–34 recognizes that married people possess responsibilities concerning how they may please their spouses. Paul addresses those obligations while contrasting marriage with the particular opportunities of unmarried service. The passage does not condemn marriage; it acknowledges the responsibilities that accompany it. A husband who gives his wife only whatever attention remains after every other interest has been satisfied is hardly demonstrating that he cherishes her. A wife who consistently treats her husband as less important than every outside obligation should likewise examine her conduct. This is not a demand for constant entertainment or uninterrupted conversation. It is a call to recognize that companionship requires deliberate consideration. You cannot spend years starving a relationship of attention and then act astonished when there is little warmth remaining at the table.

7. Heirs Together of the Grace of Life: Honour, Understanding, and Christian Fellowship

First Peter 3:7 gives one of the most searching instructions addressed to Christian husbands: “Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered.” The verse does not merely command the husband to provide a dwelling place. It commands him to dwell with his wife according to knowledge. That requires consideration, understanding, attention, and conduct informed by the responsibilities of marriage. The expression “weaker vessel” must not be twisted into a

declaration that women are spiritually inferior or incapable of wisdom. Peter immediately describes husband and wife as “heirs together of the grace of life.” The same passage that recognizes a distinction also commands honour. A husband who uses the first expression to justify contempt while ignoring the second has demonstrated the danger of reading Scripture with one eye closed.

The warning concerning hindered prayers is especially serious. Peter does not describe the husband's treatment of his wife as an insignificant private matter having no connection with his spiritual life. He places the marriage relationship directly alongside the command that their prayers be not hindered. The husband who mistreats his wife while imagining that his religious activities excuse his conduct has badly misunderstood the passage. He may possess a shelf filled with theological books, an impressive collection of sermon notes, and enough doctrinal terminology to confuse a room full of listeners. None of those possessions substitutes for obedience at home. The wife is to receive honour, not humiliation. She is to be treated with understanding, not contempt. The husband must not use physical strength, financial control, religious language, or his position in the household to justify cruelty. A man who wants Heaven to hear his prayers had better pay attention when Scripture tells him how to treat the woman sitting across from him at the dinner table.

The description “heirs together of the grace of life” also reminds believers that marriage does not determine their standing before God. Salvation in the present dispensation is by grace through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, not by marriage, domestic performance, or human merit. Ephesians 2:8–9 settles that matter. Husband and wife who have trusted Christ are fellow recipients of divine grace, possessing spiritual blessings that neither can claim as a reward for superiority over the other. Their earthly responsibilities differ, but their salvation rests upon the same Saviour. The husband is not more securely saved because he is the head of the household, and the wife is not spiritually inferior because she receives instruction concerning submission. Both must walk according to Scripture. Both must answer for their conduct. Both should encourage one another toward faithful Christian living. Marriage is not a contest for spiritual importance. The husband and wife who stand equally dependent upon the grace of God have little reason to spend their married lives boasting about how much better they are than each other.

Conclusion

The original declaration of Genesis 2:18 establishes the foundation of marital companionship with remarkable clarity: “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him.” God identified the need, God supplied the woman, and God established the relationship. Eve was not created as an inferior creature whose only

purpose was to satisfy Adam's personal demands. Neither was she created as a rival commissioned to compete with him for authority. She was a suitable companion, sharing his human nature and entering the relationship God had ordained. The New Testament recognizes distinct responsibilities within marriage while commanding love, honour, consideration, and godly conduct. Proverbs identifies a prudent wife as a blessing from the LORD. Ecclesiastes demonstrates the value of companionship and shared burdens. Peter commands the husband to dwell with his wife according to knowledge and to give her honour. The biblical testimony is not confused, even when human behavior is. God established companionship without competition, order without cruelty, and mutual dependence without abolishing individual responsibility. The trouble begins when sinners attempt to improve that arrangement by replacing obedience with pride.

A Christian marriage should therefore demonstrate something better than the endless struggle for personal importance that characterizes so many relationships. The husband ought to lead responsibly, love sacrificially, listen attentively, and recognize the wisdom and assistance his wife contributes to the household. The wife ought to fulfill her responsibilities faithfully, demonstrate godly judgment, support what is right, and treat her husband with the respect commanded by Scripture. Both must resist bitterness, selfishness, dishonesty, and the foolish desire to win every disagreement. When one suffers, the other should demonstrate compassion. When one becomes weary, the other should offer encouragement. When legitimate differences arise, they should be addressed through truthfulness, patience, and obedience to God's Word rather than manipulation or intimidation. None of this requires pretending that husbands and wives are identical or that their responsibilities cannot differ. The Bible already recognizes those distinctions. What it does not authorize is turning those differences into excuses for contempt. A good marriage is not built by two people proving that they can live without each other. It is strengthened when both faithfully fulfill the responsibilities God has given them toward each other.

The final question is whether Christian husbands and wives will accept God's purpose for companionship or continue following the world's example of competition. A husband can spend his life insisting that he possesses authority while neglecting the love that should accompany it. A wife can spend her life resenting the responsibilities Scripture gives her while overlooking the blessings of faithful companionship. Both can become so occupied with defending themselves that they forget the relationship God established for their good. But the Word of God provides a better way. Proverbs 18:22 declares that finding a wife is finding a good thing. Ecclesiastes 4:9 reminds us that two are better than one. First Peter 3:7 commands honour and recognizes Christian husbands and wives as heirs together of the grace of life. Those are not empty religious decorations. They are truths to be practiced in the kitchen, at the dinner table, during financial difficulties, through sickness, amid

family responsibilities, and across the ordinary years of married life. The Christian home does not need two competing rulers fighting over a throne. It needs a husband and wife who fear God enough to obey His Word and love one another enough to fulfill their obligations. The woman was not created to replace the man, and the man was not given a wife to enlarge his kingdom. God provided companionship, and the wisest husband and wife are those who stop fighting for superiority and start thanking the LORD for the help He has given them.

4 of 10 – Marriage by the Book – The Husband's Headship: Authority With Accountability

Key Passage: Ephesians 5:23–25 (KJV)

"For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it." — Ephesians 5:23–25

Introduction

There is a peculiar disease running through modern Christianity that causes certain people to develop temporary blindness whenever they encounter a verse that contradicts the prevailing opinions of society. Open your King James Bible to Ephesians 5:23, and you will discover a statement that has survived nearly two thousand years of opposition without surrendering so much as a comma: "For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church." There it stands. No committee voted it into existence, no denomination possesses the authority to remove it, and no collection of modern experts can revise it by declaring that civilization has finally progressed beyond the wisdom of Almighty God. The Apostle Paul did not apologize for the divine order of marriage, and neither should a Bible believer. But before some self-appointed household dictator begins congratulating himself, he had better keep reading. The same passage that establishes the husband's headship commands him to love his wife as Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for it. The Bible gives the husband a position of responsibility, not a license to become an unbearable little tyrant wearing a wedding ring.

The trouble comes from two opposite directions, and both manage to miss the Scriptures while claiming to possess superior wisdom. On one side stands the modern rebellion against every distinction God established between husband and wife. According to this

crowd, biblical headship must be eliminated because any recognizable order is automatically offensive to contemporary thinking. Apparently, the God who created the man, fashioned the woman, and established marriage has become hopelessly outdated and must now receive instructions from people who cannot even maintain agreement concerning the meaning of the family. On the other side stands the man who quotes Ephesians 5:23 with tremendous enthusiasm while treating Ephesians 5:25 as though it were written in invisible ink. He wants authority without sacrifice, recognition without responsibility, obedience without consideration, and respect without demonstrating the character commanded by God. He has discovered the verse that tells his wife what to do but appears remarkably unfamiliar with the verses that tell him what to do. Both errors arise from the same underlying sin: placing human preference above divine authority. One crowd wants to erase the husband's headship, while the other wants to turn it into something God never authorized.

The proper approach is neither to soften the biblical order nor to defend its abuse. We must examine what the Scripture actually says, who receives the instructions, and how the various passages fit together. First Corinthians 11:3 establishes a divine order of headship. Ephesians 5:23–29 explains the husband's responsibilities through the relationship between Christ and His Church. Colossians 3:19 commands husbands to love their wives and forbids bitterness against them. First Peter 3:7 requires husbands to dwell with their wives according to knowledge, giving them honour, and warns that their prayers may be hindered through disobedience. These are not suggestions collected from a Christian marriage seminar. They are inspired instructions preserved in the Word of God. A husband who desires to exercise biblical authority must therefore accept the biblical obligations accompanying that authority. He cannot separate the position from the conduct required of the person occupying it. The husband is not the head of the home because he is the most important person in the building. He is the head because God has assigned him a responsibility for which he will answer to God.

1. The Divine Order: Headship Is Established by God, Not Invented by Man

First Corinthians 11:3 establishes the foundational order: “But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God.” Notice the arrangement. Paul does not begin by announcing the authority of the man and leaving the matter there. He places the man beneath the headship of Christ and establishes the order within a larger divine arrangement. The historical context concerns distinctions and conduct within the Corinthian assembly, including the discussion of head coverings that follows. Nevertheless, the statement establishes an order that reaches beyond the immediate controversy. The man is not an independent ruler

possessing unlimited authority. He is himself under authority. That single observation destroys the argument of the fellow who believes headship means that nobody has the right to question his conduct. The husband may be the head of his wife, but Christ is the head of the man. A man who demands submission while refusing to submit himself to Jesus Christ has begun his household government with a rebellion against his own Head.

The creation account reinforces the distinction without establishing any difference in fundamental human worth. Genesis 2:18 records God's determination to make Adam "an help meet for him." First Corinthians 11:8 explains, "For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man." Yet Paul immediately prevents anyone from turning the creation order into an excuse for boasting. Verse 11 declares, "Nevertheless neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord." Verse 12 adds that although the woman came from the man, the man also comes by the woman, "but all things of God." There is the balance that human pride continually attempts to destroy. God established distinction without authorizing contempt. The husband occupies an assigned position, but he does not possess a superior soul, a greater claim upon salvation, or an exemption from obedience. The woman is not spiritually inferior because the responsibilities differ. Divine order establishes responsibility; it does not provide a measuring stick for determining whose humanity is worth more.

Ephesians 5:23 makes the application unmistakable: "For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church." The comparison is deliberate, but comparisons must be handled honestly. Jesus Christ is the sinless Head of His Church, possessing divine authority and perfect wisdom. An earthly husband is a fallible sinner who may misunderstand circumstances, exercise poor judgment, and require correction. The husband does not become an earthly substitute for the omniscience of Christ because somebody pronounced him married. He receives an office of responsibility within the household, and he must exercise it under the authority of the Lord. The comparison with Christ establishes the standard toward which his conduct must be directed; it does not transfer Christ's divine attributes to him. That distinction is worth remembering whenever a man begins behaving as though disagreement with his personal preference constitutes rebellion against Almighty God. A husband's authority is delegated, limited, and accountable. He is responsible to lead his household, but he has never been appointed its deity.

2. Christ Loved the Church: The Standard That Exposes Selfish Headship

Ephesians 5:25 contains the command that ought to bring every Christian husband under serious conviction: "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it." The Apostle does not instruct the husband merely to provide

occasional compliments, remember an anniversary, or purchase an impressive gift when he has behaved foolishly. He directs the man's attention to Calvary. Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for it. His love was demonstrated through sacrifice, not selfish demands. The husband cannot reproduce the redeeming work of Christ, and the passage does not suggest that he can. Salvation belongs exclusively to the Saviour. But the sacrificial character of Christ's love establishes a tremendous moral obligation. The husband must consider the welfare of his wife rather than treating marriage as an arrangement designed primarily for his own comfort. The man who wants Christ's authority in the marriage illustration had better examine Christ's sacrifice in the very next verse.

Paul continues in Ephesians 5:28: “So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself.” This statement rests upon the one-flesh relationship established in Genesis 2:24. A husband who cherishes his wife is not performing an unnecessary act of generosity toward somebody unrelated to him. He is fulfilling his responsibility toward the woman joined to him in marriage. Verse 29 explains, “For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church.” Notice those two expressions: nourishing and cherishing. They describe care, attention, and concern rather than neglect, contempt, or harsh domination. The man who eats well, rests comfortably, purchases whatever he desires, and leaves his wife to bear every difficulty alone has not demonstrated the sacrificial love described here. He has demonstrated that selfishness can survive even after a person has learned to quote several excellent Bible verses.

The comparison becomes more searching when examined against the ordinary activities of married life. Sacrificial love is not demonstrated merely through dramatic declarations about being willing to die for one's wife. It is demonstrated through daily faithfulness while both husband and wife are still alive. A man may announce that he would face an invading army to protect his household while refusing to inconvenience himself long enough to help his exhausted wife through an ordinary difficulty. That kind of heroism is wonderfully inexpensive because the invading army seldom arrives. The dishes, household responsibilities, financial obligations, sickness, and unexpected troubles arrive regularly. First John 3:18 instructs believers, “My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.” Although the immediate instruction concerns Christian love generally, its application within marriage is unmistakable. The husband's profession must be supported by conduct. A man who will not sacrifice his convenience for his wife should be cautious about boasting how eagerly he would sacrifice his life for her.

3. Authority Without Cruelty: What Biblical Headship Never Authorizes

Colossians 3:19 gives an instruction so plain that it requires considerable determination to misunderstand it: “Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them.” The Apostle does not say that husbands should love their wives when the women agree with every decision, satisfy every preference, or behave exactly as their husbands desire. He gives a direct command to the husband concerning his own conduct. Bitterness is forbidden. Harsh resentment, continuing hostility, calculated humiliation, and vindictive treatment cannot be defended through appeals to biblical headship. Ephesians 4:31 commands believers to put away “all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, … with all malice.” These commandments do not cease operating when a man enters his house and closes the front door. A Christian husband has no biblical permission to become cruel in private while maintaining a respectable appearance in public. A man who can control his temper before strangers but regularly unleashes it upon his wife has demonstrated that he knows how to exercise restraint and has chosen not to exercise it at home.

First Peter 3:7 reinforces the seriousness of the matter: “Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered.” The husband is commanded to give honour, not humiliation. The expression “weaker vessel” must not be converted into an accusation that women possess inferior intelligence, lesser spiritual value, or no capacity for godly wisdom. Peter immediately identifies believing husbands and wives as heirs together of the grace of life. The husband must recognize his wife's circumstances, limitations, strengths, concerns, and legitimate needs. He is not entitled to disregard her humanity because he possesses a position of responsibility. A man who deliberately intimidates his wife, threatens her safety, controls her through fear, or employs physical force to secure compliance has departed from the conduct commanded in this passage. Peter does not congratulate such a man upon his impressive authority. He warns husbands that their treatment of their wives bears directly upon their spiritual lives.

Neither does biblical submission require a wife to obey commands that contradict the Word of God or to remain exposed to violence without seeking safety and assistance. Acts 5:29 declares, “We ought to obey God rather than men.” The immediate passage concerns the apostles and the authorities who commanded them to stop preaching, but the principle demonstrates that human authority cannot supersede divine authority. A husband's headship does not grant him permission to command wickedness or demand that serious wrongdoing be concealed. Protection from danger, truthful testimony, lawful intervention, and appropriate accountability are not acts of rebellion against Scripture. They are consistent with the biblical distinction between lawful authority and sinful conduct. Nor should forgiveness be confused with pretending that continuing abuse has

ceased. Repentance involves acknowledging wrongdoing and turning from it, not simply demanding that another person forget what happened. The Bible never gives a husband the right to use the Word of God as a club against the woman he has been commanded to cherish.

4. Spiritual Leadership: A Man Must Lead Before He Demands to Be Followed

The Christian husband's responsibility includes establishing a godly example within his household. Joshua 24:15 contains the well-known declaration, “but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.” Joshua was addressing Israel in a particular historical setting, confronting the nation with the necessity of serving the true God rather than idols. The passage is not a New Testament command making every Christian husband a second Joshua. Nevertheless, the statement provides a legitimate illustration of household leadership governed by devotion to the LORD. A Christian man ought to demonstrate personal faithfulness rather than merely demanding religious activity from the people living under his roof. He should read and believe the Scriptures, maintain an honest testimony, pray, pursue holiness, and demonstrate respect for the local church. A husband who continually lectures his household about spiritual obligations while refusing to fulfill his own has mistaken religious noise for spiritual leadership. The loudest voice in the home is not necessarily the godliest one, and volume has never been a substitute for obedience.

First Timothy 3:4 describes a qualification of a bishop as “One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity.” The following verse asks, “For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?” The immediate context concerns qualifications for pastoral oversight, and that distinction must be preserved. Not every husband is called to be a bishop. Nevertheless, the passage demonstrates that the condition of a man's household is relevant to evaluating his fitness for spiritual responsibility. A man who cannot govern himself, who displays uncontrolled anger, or who continually neglects those entrusted to his care should not imagine that public religious activity automatically establishes his spiritual maturity. God is concerned with conduct, not merely reputation. The household reveals much about a man's character because the people living with him witness behavior that outsiders may never observe. A polished testimony in the pulpit does not erase a rotten testimony at the dinner table.

Ephesians 6:4 gives fathers another direct command: “And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.” The responsibility includes both restraint and instruction. Fathers must not provoke their children through unreasonable harshness, continual humiliation, or arbitrary conduct. They must also provide godly teaching and correction. A husband who understands spiritual leadership should therefore recognize that his example affects more than his own

reputation. Children observe how their father speaks to their mother, how he handles disagreement, whether he admits wrongdoing, and whether his Christianity survives ordinary frustration. He cannot consistently treat his wife with contempt and then expect his children to learn honour through lectures. When a father sins, humility requires confession and correction rather than another demonstration of injured pride. Children may forget portions of a father's instruction, but they seldom fail to recognize whether he practices the conduct he demands from everybody else.

5. Provision and Protection: Responsibility Is More Than Holding a Position

First Timothy 5:8 declares, “But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.” The immediate discussion concerns family obligations, particularly the care of widows and the responsibility of relatives to provide necessary assistance. The principle nevertheless carries serious implications for household stewardship. A Christian man cannot reasonably boast about his position while deliberately refusing to fulfill responsibilities that he is capable of performing. Second Thessalonians 3:10 states, “that if any would not work, neither should he eat.” Notice the distinction between refusing to work and being unable to work. Scripture does not condemn a man for illness, disability, unemployment beyond his control, or circumstances in which faithful effort has not produced sufficient income. It condemns deliberate irresponsibility. A husband ought to pursue honest labor according to his ability and circumstances. A paycheck cannot replace a father's presence, but neither can a collection of religious speeches replace honest work when a man is able and refuses to provide.

Provision also requires wisdom concerning how resources are used. Proverbs 21:5 declares, “The thoughts of the diligent tend only to plenteousness; but of every one that is hasty only to want.” The passage is wisdom instruction, not a guarantee that every diligent Christian will become wealthy. Nevertheless, it commends careful planning over reckless haste. A husband who earns money and immediately wastes it upon personal indulgence while necessary household obligations remain unpaid has not demonstrated faithful stewardship. Neither has a man who conceals debts, makes irresponsible financial commitments, or treats his wife as though she has no legitimate interest in the condition of their shared household. Proverbs 22:7 warns, “the borrower is servant to the lender.” Financial decisions carry consequences, and the head of a household should not behave as though those consequences will fall upon everybody except himself. Biblical leadership requires prudence, honesty, discipline, and the willingness to distinguish genuine needs from selfish appetites. A man may possess an impressive collection of expensive possessions while his household remains spiritually and financially disordered.

Protection is another responsibility that must be understood correctly. A husband ought to concern himself with the physical safety, moral welfare, and legitimate needs of his wife and family. That responsibility does not authorize jealousy, isolation, coercion, or treating his wife as personal property. The Christian husband should seek to protect rather than threaten, encourage rather than intimidate, and provide security rather than manufacture fear. First Corinthians 13:5 declares concerning charity that it “seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil.” The immediate chapter concerns the superiority and character of charity in Christian conduct, but its application to marital love is direct. Genuine concern does not continually demand personal advantage. A husband must also recognize that his wife possesses wisdom, judgment, and responsibilities of her own. Protection is not accomplished by pretending that she is incapable of functioning without his permission. The man who claims he must control every movement of his wife because he is protecting her has confused the responsibilities of a husband with the arrangements of a prison keeper.

6. Wise Decisions: Leadership Requires Listening Before Acting

One of the more foolish assumptions attached to biblical headship is the idea that a husband demonstrates strength by refusing to listen. According to this reasoning, the moment a man seriously considers his wife's judgment, he has somehow surrendered his authority. Evidently, leadership now consists of possessing an opinion and defending it against all available evidence. But Proverbs 18:13 declares, “He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him.” Proverbs 15:22 adds, “Without counsel purposes are disappointed: but in the multitude of counsellors they are established.” These passages commend careful consideration rather than arrogant haste. A husband who refuses to hear his wife's concerns may be ignoring some of the most relevant information available concerning the matter before him. The woman who shares his household often possesses knowledge about its needs that outsiders do not. A man who mistakes stubbornness for leadership may spend years defending decisions that a few minutes of humble listening would have prevented.

The virtuous woman of Proverbs 31 provides a striking illustration of capable judgment within the household. Proverbs 31:16 declares, “She considereth a field, and buyeth it: with the fruit of her hands she planteth a vineyard.” Verse 26 adds, “She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness.” The passage describes diligence, industry, judgment, generosity, household management, and wisdom. It does not portray the wife as an incapable creature whose opinions possess no value. Proverbs 31:11 states, “The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil.” That is a remarkable testimony concerning the confidence a husband may place in a

faithful wife. Of course, this wisdom literature is not an instruction requiring every woman to purchase property or conduct identical business activities. The passage displays virtues worthy of consideration. A Christian husband who refuses to recognize his wife's wisdom because he believes listening would diminish his authority has not learned much from the chapter.

There is an important distinction between receiving counsel and surrendering responsibility. Genesis 3:17 records God's words to Adam concerning his disobedience, including the statement, “Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree.” The problem was not that Adam had listened to a woman. The problem was that he obeyed a course of action contrary to God's explicit command. Genesis 21:12 later records God telling Abraham concerning Sarah, “in all that Sarah hath said unto thee, hearken unto her voice.” The situations differ, and their contexts must be preserved, but together they demonstrate that listening to a wife is not inherently sinful. What matters is whether the resulting conduct agrees with God's Word. A husband should therefore seek counsel, consider consequences, pray, examine Scripture, and act responsibly. Where disagreements remain, he must not use his position to excuse selfishness or wrongdoing. If a man insists upon possessing the final responsibility for household decisions, he had better accept the first responsibility for exercising godly judgment.

7. The Husband Before God's Judgment: Accountability Cannot Be Escaped

First Peter 3:7 concludes its command to husbands with a warning that deserves to be read without explanation from anybody attempting to soften it: “that your prayers be not hindered.” The husband's treatment of his wife is connected directly with his spiritual conduct before God. Peter does not suggest that religious activity makes domestic disobedience insignificant. He does not tell the husband that public service will compensate for private cruelty. The man is instructed to dwell with his wife according to knowledge and give her honour, with the warning that failure in this area may hinder his prayers. That ought to disturb the complacency of any husband who believes his treatment of his wife is nobody's concern but his own. God sees what happens behind the closed doors of a household. A man may conceal his conduct from his congregation, his friends, and the people who admire his religious testimony. He cannot conceal it from the LORD. A husband may silence his wife through intimidation, but he cannot silence the God who commanded him to honour her.

Second Corinthians 5:10 declares, “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.” The passage concerns the believer's accountability before Christ and must not be confused with the Great White Throne judgment of

Revelation 20. Neither should it be twisted into teaching that a saved person must earn or maintain salvation through perfect domestic conduct. Ephesians 2:8–9 establishes salvation by grace through faith, not of works. Romans 8:1 declares, “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.” Yet eternal security does not eliminate the believer's responsibility for his conduct. A saved husband remains accountable for his treatment of his wife, his use of authority, his words, his stewardship, and his faithfulness. Grace does not turn cruelty into virtue or selfishness into obedience. The Christian husband is eternally secure in Christ, but he is not eternally excused from the consequences and accountability of his conduct.

The seriousness of headship becomes even clearer when the marriage relationship is considered in light of Ephesians 5:31–32. Paul repeats the one-flesh language from Genesis and declares, “This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.” The first marriage in Eden was a historical institution established long before the New Testament revelation of the Church as the body of Christ. The Apostle later reveals its significance in relation to Christ and His Church, without requiring us to pretend that Adam possessed the completed revelation of Ephesians. The earthly husband is not the Saviour of his wife, and his conduct cannot reproduce the redeeming work of Calvary. Christ alone accomplished redemption. Nevertheless, the comparison establishes an extraordinary standard for Christian marriage. The husband is instructed to love, nourish, and cherish his wife in a manner consistent with the spiritual truth being illustrated. A man who claims to represent Christlike headship while practicing selfish domination is not illustrating the Saviour. He is advertising how far his conduct has departed from the biblical picture.

Conclusion

The doctrine of the husband's headship is neither complicated nor optional merely because the modern world has decided that it dislikes the arrangement. First Corinthians 11:3 establishes the divine order, and Ephesians 5:23 plainly declares that the husband is the head of the wife. Those passages cannot be erased without rejecting the authority of the Scriptures. But the same Bible that establishes headship also defines the conduct required of the man who occupies that position. He must love his wife as Christ loved the Church. He must nourish and cherish her. He must not be bitter against her. He must dwell with her according to knowledge and give her honour. He must fulfill his responsibilities rather than hiding behind his title. Biblical authority is not an ornament that a man wears to impress his household. It is a responsibility entrusted to him by Almighty God. A crown without character is merely decoration, and authority without obedience is rebellion wearing an official uniform. The Christian man must accept the whole counsel of God rather than selecting only those passages that appear to serve his personal advantage.

Every husband ought to examine his conduct in light of these Scriptures. Does he demonstrate sacrificial love, or does he continually demand sacrifice from everybody else? Does he provide according to his ability, or does he excuse avoidable irresponsibility? Does he consider his wife's judgment, or does he regard every disagreement as an insult to his position? Does he speak with kindness, or does his household live beneath the continual threat of his anger? Does he establish a godly example, or does he rely upon religious vocabulary to disguise personal disobedience? These are not questions designed to destroy biblical headship. They are questions demanded by the responsibilities attached to it. A wife is not commanded to worship her husband, and a husband is not appointed to rule through fear. Both are accountable to the LORD. The man who truly understands his responsibility will be more concerned about fulfilling it faithfully than constantly announcing that he possesses it. A husband who must remind everybody of his authority every fifteen minutes may need to spend more time demonstrating the character that ought to accompany it.

The Christian home desperately needs men who will accept the responsibilities God has placed upon them without corrupting those responsibilities through pride, laziness, bitterness, or cruelty. It needs husbands who believe the King James Bible enough to obey the commandments directed toward themselves, not merely the commandments directed toward their wives. It needs men willing to work, protect, provide, pray, listen, repent when wrong, and demonstrate the love commanded in Ephesians 5. The example is Jesus Christ, who loved the Church and gave Himself for it. That comparison should humble every husband who approaches it seriously, because no fallen man can claim to have perfectly reproduced the Saviour's love. Yet the standard remains, and the obligation remains with it. Biblical headship is not established by intimidation or maintained through selfish demands. It is exercised through obedience to the Word of God, responsible leadership, sacrificial love, and reverence for the One who established the marriage relationship. The husband is not called to be the king of a little kingdom where everybody exists to serve his preferences. He is called to be the head of a household where his authority is governed by Scripture, his conduct is measured against Christ's example, and his responsibilities are carried before the eyes of Almighty God. The man who wants the position must be willing to bear the weight.

5 of 10 – Marriage by the Book – The Christian Wife: Submission, Wisdom, and Godly Strength

Key Passage: Ephesians 5:22–24 (KJV)

“Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing.” — Ephesians 5:22–24

Introduction

There are certain passages in the King James Bible that modern society would gladly remove if it could locate a printing press willing to cooperate with its rebellion. Ephesians 5:22 is certainly one of them. **“Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.”** There it stands, without apology, without qualification from a committee of modern experts, and without the slightest indication that Almighty God intended to revise the arrangement whenever public opinion changed direction. The trouble is not that the verse is difficult to understand. The trouble is that fallen human nature does not enjoy being told what to do, particularly when the instruction comes from an authority it cannot overthrow. Yet another problem arises when certain men seize upon this passage as though God had handed them a royal decree authorizing every selfish demand they might invent. One crowd wants to erase the command, while another wants to turn it into something the Scripture never authorized. Both have managed to miss the Bible while making a tremendous amount of noise about marriage. **The Christian wife is not called to rebellion against God's order, and the Christian husband has not been appointed the Almighty's replacement.**

The remarkable thing about the biblical description of a godly wife is that it bears almost no resemblance to the caricatures circulated by either side of the controversy. Some imagine that submission means a woman must surrender her intelligence, abandon her judgment, bury her abilities, and spend the remainder of her life functioning as a domestic servant who is permitted to speak only when her husband requests information. Others insist that a woman cannot possess dignity unless she rejects every distinction God established between husband and wife. Now open Proverbs 31 and examine the woman praised by Scripture. She conducts business, considers property, purchases a field, manages resources, provides for her household, assists the poor, speaks with wisdom, and earns the confidence of her husband. She is industrious, prudent, capable, generous, and strong. Evidently, the Holy Ghost never received the announcement that biblical womanhood requires a woman to become helpless. Neither did He authorize the modern theory that a capable woman must therefore become rebellious. **The virtuous woman of Proverbs 31 could conduct business, manage a household, and recognize the authority of God without experiencing the slightest difficulty reconciling those responsibilities.**

The Christian wife must be understood through the whole counsel of God rather than through isolated phrases pulled from their contexts. Ephesians 5 establishes the order of marriage in connection with Christ and His Church. Colossians 3:18 commands submission **"as it is fit in the Lord."** First Peter 3 examines the godly conduct and inward character of a wife, including circumstances in which her husband is disobedient to the Word. Proverbs 31 provides an extraordinary portrait of wisdom, industry, faithfulness, and the fear of God. These passages occupy different historical and doctrinal settings, and they must be handled accordingly. The Proverbs belong to Old Testament wisdom literature, while Ephesians, Colossians, and First Peter provide instruction applicable to Christian conduct. None teaches that a wife is saved through marriage, earns eternal life through obedience, or becomes spiritually inferior to her husband. Salvation remains by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. Marriage establishes earthly responsibilities; it does not alter the means of redemption. **A woman does not become more valuable to God by rebelling against His Word, and a husband does not become more godly by misusing that Word against her.**

1. Submission Begins With God's Authority, Not the Husband's Ego

The first thing to notice about Ephesians 5:22 is the precise wording: **"Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord."** The command is addressed to wives concerning their own husbands. It does not declare that every woman must submit to every man simply because he happens to possess a masculine name and an impressive opinion of himself. The relationship under consideration is marriage, not a universal arrangement in which the female half of humanity becomes subject to every male stranger who walks through the door. The expression **"as unto the Lord"** also establishes the spiritual character of the responsibility. The wife is not instructed to treat her husband as God. She is instructed to recognize the order established by God. That distinction is absolutely essential. The husband remains a fallen human being who can make mistakes, misunderstand circumstances, and sin against the Lord. His position does not transform his personal preferences into inspired commandments. **A husband may be the head of his wife, but he is not the fourth person of the Godhead.**

The preceding verse establishes the broader setting. Ephesians 5:21 declares, **"Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God."** Paul is addressing believers concerning their conduct under the influence of the Spirit, having already warned against drunkenness and commanded them to be filled with the Spirit in verse 18. The instructions concerning husbands and wives follow within that context. This does not erase the particular responsibility of the wife or the headship assigned to the husband. Paul proceeds to state those distinctions plainly. But it demonstrates that Christian conduct is

governed by reverence for God rather than personal pride. The husband cannot demand godliness from his wife while excusing wickedness in himself. The wife cannot reject a biblical responsibility merely because obedience requires humility. Both stand beneath the authority of Scripture. **The fear of God should govern the marriage before either spouse begins discussing the authority of the other.** A household cannot be rightly ordered when its occupants recognize every authority except the Lord who established it.

Colossians 3:18 supplies an additional expression that must not be overlooked: **"Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord."** Those final words prevent any honest reader from treating submission as unlimited permission for a husband to command sin. The wife remains accountable to God. If a husband demands dishonesty, sexual immorality, participation in wickedness, or concealment of serious wrongdoing, the command is not made righteous merely because it comes from the husband. Acts 5:29 records the apostles declaring, **"We ought to obey God rather than men."** The historical setting concerns the apostles' obligation to preach despite opposition from religious authorities, but the principle concerning God's superior authority is unmistakable. No human authority can lawfully replace the authority of the Creator. Submission is not rebellion against conscience, surrender of moral responsibility, or permission for abuse. **The Christian wife is commanded to recognize her husband's rightful responsibility, not to follow him into sin and call the journey obedience.**

2. The Creation Order: Different Responsibilities Without Inferior Worth

The divine order of marriage did not originate with the social customs of the Roman Empire or the personal preferences of the Apostle Paul. It reaches back to the creation account. Genesis 2:18 declares, **"And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him."** God formed Adam from the dust of the ground, placed him in the garden, and assigned him responsibilities before creating Eve. The woman was then fashioned from the man's rib and brought unto him by the LORD. Genesis 2:23 records Adam's recognition: **"This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh."** The woman was not created as another animal over which Adam exercised dominion. She shared his human nature and was provided as a suitable companion. The arrangement establishes distinction without establishing a difference in human dignity. God created a man and a woman, not a superior creature and an inferior specimen. **The same Creator who established their different responsibilities also established their common humanity.**

First Corinthians 11:3 states, **"But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God."** The immediate discussion concerns conduct and distinctions within the Corinthian assembly,

and the passage must not be removed from that setting. Nevertheless, the divine order is plainly stated. Paul continues in verse 8, **"For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man."** Yet verse 11 adds, **"Nevertheless neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord."** The Apostle recognizes both order and mutual dependence. The first woman came from the man, but subsequent men enter the world through women. Both owe their existence to God. The fellow who uses the order of creation to boast about his superiority might remember that he himself entered the world through the very kind of person he proposes to despise. **God established an order of responsibility, not a contest to determine whose humanity deserves greater respect.**

First Timothy 2:13–14 also appeals to the creation account: **"For Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression."** The immediate passage concerns conduct, teaching, and authority within the assembly, and it must not be carelessly transformed into an accusation that all women are incapable of sound judgment. Adam was not deceived, yet he sinned knowingly, and Romans 5:12 places tremendous responsibility upon him concerning the entrance of sin into the world. His conduct hardly supplies grounds for boasting about masculine perfection. Neither does Eve's deception excuse her disobedience. Both were accountable to God. The distinction concerning order must be maintained without inventing a doctrine of female intellectual inferiority. A Christian wife may possess excellent judgment, strong biblical understanding, and remarkable practical wisdom while recognizing the marriage responsibilities established by Scripture. **A woman does not become rebellious because she is intelligent, and a man does not become a capable leader merely because he was born male.**

3. The Virtuous Woman: Strength That Does Not Need to Rebel

Proverbs 31:10 asks, **"Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies."** The chapter contains the instruction associated with King Lemuel and the teaching received from his mother, followed by the magnificent description of a virtuous woman. Its original setting belongs to Old Testament wisdom literature, not a direct command requiring every Christian wife to perform an identical schedule of activities. Nevertheless, the virtues presented are unmistakable. The woman is faithful, trustworthy, industrious, wise, generous, and devoted to the welfare of her household. Verse 11 declares, **"The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil."** Verse 12 adds, **"She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life."** There is the foundation of her character. Her husband can trust her because she is faithful. Her value is not measured merely by appearance, possessions, or social standing. **A trustworthy wife possesses riches that cannot be purchased at a jewelry counter.**

Consider the woman's industry and judgment. Proverbs 31:16 declares, **“She considereth a field, and buyeth it: with the fruit of her hands she planteth a vineyard.”** Notice that she considers before she purchases. She exercises judgment, evaluates property, conducts a transaction, and employs the proceeds of her labor productively. Verse 18 says, **“She perceiveth that her merchandise is good: her candle goeth not out by night.”** Verse 24 records her making fine linen and delivering girdles unto the merchant. This woman possesses business ability, initiative, diligence, and practical understanding. She is not sitting helplessly in a corner waiting for somebody to tell her whether she may think. Neither does the passage portray her industry as rebellion against her husband. Her activities contribute to the prosperity and security of the household. The modern assumption that biblical submission requires intellectual helplessness collapses when Proverbs 31 is allowed to speak. **The virtuous woman could apparently conduct business without first obtaining a certificate from modern society declaring that she had been liberated from the Bible.**

Her strength extends beyond financial judgment. Proverbs 31:17 declares, **“She girdeth her loins with strength, and strengtheneth her arms.”** Verse 20 says, **“She stretcheth out her hand to the poor; yea, she reacheth forth her hands to the needy.”** Verse 26 adds, **“She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness.”** The portrait is not merely of someone who accumulates wealth or completes household tasks. She possesses strength, compassion, wisdom, and godly speech. Most importantly, verse 30 identifies the foundation of her excellence: **“Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the LORD, she shall be praised.”** Her character rests upon reverence for God. Physical beauty fades, public admiration changes, and worldly recognition can disappear overnight. The fear of the LORD remains. **A woman who fears God has something more enduring than beauty, more valuable than popularity, and more useful than a thousand fashionable opinions about female independence.**

4. The Hidden Woman of the Heart: Godliness Without Religious Display

First Peter 3:1 begins, **“Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives.”** The passage particularly considers circumstances in which a wife has a husband who is disobedient to the Word. Peter does not instruct the wife to become contentious, manipulate her husband through religion, or continually manufacture arguments in the hope that sheer persistence will produce spiritual change. He emphasizes godly conduct. Verse 2 describes the husbands beholding **“your chaste conversation coupled with fear.”** In the language of the passage, conversation concerns conduct and manner of life, not merely verbal discussion. The wife's testimony is supposed

to possess substance beyond religious speeches. This does not mean that the Gospel becomes unnecessary or that sinners can be saved without faith in Jesus Christ. Romans 10:17 declares that faith comes by hearing the Word of God. Peter is emphasizing the powerful testimony of consistent conduct.

The following verses turn from outward appearance to inward character. First Peter 3:3–4 declares, **"Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price."** The contrast concerns the priority of inward godliness over outward decoration. It would be foolish to interpret the passage as an absolute prohibition against wearing apparel, since clothing appears in the same description. Peter is not commanding women to abandon ordinary dress. He is warning against making external adornment the substance of personal worth. A meek and quiet spirit is not the same thing as an empty mind or an inability to speak. Meekness involves strength governed rightly. **The world spends fortunes decorating the outside of a person while ignoring the corruption that may be ruling the heart.**

Peter then introduces Sarah as an example, declaring in verse 6, **"Even as Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose daughters ye are, as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement."** The historical reference reaches back to the patriarchal period, and the application concerns godly conduct rather than the transfer of every circumstance in Abraham's household to modern Christian marriages. Sarah's example demonstrates respect within the marriage relationship, but it does not establish that every decision Abraham made was wise or that every husband possesses unquestionable judgment. Genesis itself records failures and complications within that household. The same chapter in First Peter concludes by requiring husbands to honour their wives as heirs together of the grace of life. The command concerning submission cannot be separated from that surrounding instruction. Notice also Peter's emphasis upon doing well without being governed by fear. **Biblical reverence is not produced by terror, and a wife does not become more godly by living in dread of the man who has been commanded to love her.**

5. Wisdom in the Home: The Woman Who Builds Instead of Destroys

Proverbs 14:1 declares, **"Every wise woman buildeth her house: but the foolish plucketh it down with her hands."** There is enough practical instruction in that one verse to occupy a considerable portion of married life. The wise woman builds; the foolish woman destroys. The difference is not determined by the size of the house, the quality of its furnishings, or the amount of money available for domestic improvements. The passage

concerns wisdom and folly. A woman can possess an expensive residence while destroying its peace through continual contention, dishonesty, and bitterness. Another may live in modest circumstances while establishing a household characterized by faithfulness, diligence, hospitality, and godly instruction. The proverb does not mean that a wife bears sole responsibility for every difficulty in a marriage. Husbands receive their own commandments and warnings. It does mean that a wife's conduct possesses tremendous influence within the home. **A foolish person can tear down in an afternoon what years of faithful labor were required to build.**

Titus 2:3–5 gives further instruction concerning the conduct of Christian women. Older women are to demonstrate godly behavior and teach younger women **"to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children,"** along with the other responsibilities described in the passage. The instruction includes discretion, chastity, goodness, attention to the home, and obedience to their own husbands. These are not fashionable qualities in an age that frequently treats every domestic responsibility as an insult to personal importance. Yet the Apostle does not present care for the household as a disgrace. He presents godly conduct as something worthy of instruction. The passage does not require every family to possess identical employment arrangements or circumstances, nor does it condemn necessary work outside the home. Proverbs 31 itself demonstrates productive activities beyond the immediate dwelling. The principle concerns faithful attention to responsibilities. **A woman does not dishonour herself by caring for the household God has entrusted to her, any more than a man dishonours himself by working to provide for it.**

Wisdom is also revealed through speech. Proverbs 31:26 declares that the virtuous woman opens her mouth with wisdom and that **"in her tongue is the law of kindness."** Proverbs 15:1 states, **"A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger."** These instructions apply with particular force when husband and wife disagree. A wife who deliberately humiliates her husband before other people, employs sarcasm to wound him, or continually rehearses his failures is not demonstrating the wisdom praised in Scripture. Neither does a husband's wrongdoing justify every destructive response his wife might choose. Yet kind speech does not forbid honest disagreement, necessary correction, or truthful testimony concerning serious sin. The distinction is between speaking truth with godly purpose and using words as weapons of personal revenge. A wise woman may speak firmly when the occasion requires it without surrendering the law of kindness. **The tongue can build a home or burn it down, and some people have managed to start the fire while insisting they were merely expressing themselves.**

6. Submission Does Not Erase Conscience, Judgment, or Accountability

One of the most dangerous distortions of biblical submission is the claim that a wife must surrender her conscience to her husband. Nothing in Ephesians 5, Colossians 3, or First Peter 3 gives a fallen man authority to replace Almighty God in another person's life. The Christian wife remains individually accountable for her conduct. Romans 14:12 declares, **"So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God."** The husband cannot answer for every personal decision his wife makes, and she cannot justify deliberate sin by explaining that her husband demanded it. The marriage relationship establishes obligations, but it does not eliminate personal responsibility before the LORD. A wife must therefore know the Scriptures for herself rather than relying exclusively upon her husband's understanding. She should be capable of recognizing sound doctrine, discerning error, and obeying God. **A woman who has surrendered her Bible, conscience, and judgment to another human being has surrendered considerably more than the Scriptures ever commanded.**

The account of Abigail provides a striking example of wise action in difficult circumstances. First Samuel 25:3 describes her as **"a woman of good understanding, and of a beautiful countenance,"** while her husband Nabal was **"churlish and evil in his doings."** When Nabal's foolish conduct endangered his household, Abigail acted with prudence to prevent further disaster. The historical narrative belongs to the days of David before his reign and must not be converted into a universal command concerning every marital disagreement. Nevertheless, it demonstrates that Scripture does not celebrate foolishness merely because a husband is responsible for it. Abigail did not become wicked by possessing better judgment than Nabal. Her wise intervention helped prevent bloodshed. The lesson is not that wives should habitually undermine their husbands whenever opinions differ. It is that doing right does not become wrong because a foolish person occupies a position of responsibility. **Godly submission has never required a woman to help a man drive the household over a cliff simply because he insists upon holding the reins.**

The same distinction applies to intimidation, coercion, and abuse. First Peter 3:7 commands husbands to give honour to their wives, recognizing them as **"heirs together of the grace of life."** Ephesians 5:25 commands husbands to love their wives as Christ loved the Church. Colossians 3:19 forbids bitterness. A husband who employs threats, violence, sexual coercion, isolation, or religious intimidation is violating the responsibilities established by those passages. A wife is not required to participate in sin, conceal serious wrongdoing, or remain in immediate danger in order to demonstrate biblical submission. Seeking protection, trustworthy assistance, and lawful intervention when necessary is not a rejection of God's authority. Nor does forgiveness require pretending that continuing wickedness has ceased. Genuine repentance concerns turning from sin, not merely demanding that an injured person forget it. **The Bible does not command a Christian**

woman to become an accomplice to evil so that her husband can preserve the appearance of authority. God's Word must never be twisted into a weapon against the very person it commands the husband to honour.

7. The Godly Wife's Greatest Strength: Her Fear of the LORD

The distinguishing characteristic of the virtuous woman appears near the conclusion of Proverbs 31: **"but a woman that feareth the LORD, she shall be praised."** That statement establishes the true foundation of godly womanhood. Her worth is not determined by physical attractiveness, educational achievement, financial independence, social recognition, or the admiration of strangers. Neither is it determined merely by her ability to satisfy every expectation another human being places upon her. She fears the LORD. Proverbs 9:10 declares, **"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding."** A woman governed by the fear of God possesses a foundation that remains firm when circumstances change. She may experience prosperity or hardship, health or sickness, appreciation or misunderstanding. Her responsibility to obey the LORD does not disappear with changing conditions. **Beauty may attract attention, wealth may purchase comfort, and popularity may fill a room, but none of them can replace a heart governed by the fear of Almighty God.**

The Scriptures contain numerous examples of women whose strength appeared through faithfulness rather than rebellion against God. Ruth demonstrated remarkable loyalty, diligence, courage, and moral character during circumstances of widowhood and poverty. Ruth 3:11 records Boaz declaring, **"for all the city of my people doth know that thou art a virtuous woman."** Her conduct took place within the historical circumstances of Israel under the law, and the narrative must not be treated as a direct description of every Christian marriage. Yet her character remains worthy of consideration. Priscilla, together with Aquila, helped instruct Apollos more accurately concerning the way of God in Acts 18:26. Her participation did not require her to overthrow the order of the local church or claim an office Scripture had not assigned her. It demonstrated useful knowledge and faithful service. **The Bible contains strong, capable, spiritually useful women without needing to rewrite a single verse concerning the responsibilities of husbands and wives.**

The influence of a godly woman may also extend through generations. Second Timothy 1:5 records Paul's remembrance of the unfeigned faith that dwelt first in Timothy's grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice. Second Timothy 3:15 reminds Timothy that **"from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus."** The passages do not teach that motherhood saves a woman or that children automatically become believers because their

mothers possess faith. Salvation remains personal, and the Gospel must be believed. Nevertheless, they demonstrate the lasting value of faithful scriptural instruction within a family. A Christian wife and mother may influence lives long after the ordinary details of household labor have been forgotten. Her testimony, prayers, instruction, wisdom, and example can leave an inheritance that money cannot purchase. Yet this spiritual usefulness is not confined to mothers; unmarried and childless Christian women also possess opportunities to serve the LORD faithfully. **The world's measure of importance changes with every generation, but Heaven has never confused public applause with eternal value.**

Conclusion

The Christian wife presented in Scripture is neither a rebellious competitor seeking to overthrow her husband nor a helpless servant existing merely to satisfy his demands. Ephesians 5 establishes her responsibility concerning submission within marriage. Colossians 3 places that responsibility within what is fitting in the Lord. First Peter 3 emphasizes godly conduct, inward character, honour, and the spiritual accountability of the husband as well as the wife. Proverbs 31 reveals a woman characterized by strength, diligence, sound judgment, generosity, wisdom, and reverence for God. These passages do not contradict one another. They expose the foolishness of the extremes that have been constructed around biblical womanhood. The woman who rejects God's order because she considers herself too important to obey it has misunderstood her responsibility. The man who imagines that the same order permits him to disregard his wife's dignity has misunderstood his. **Submission is not inferiority, strength is not rebellion, and godly womanhood is not measured by how successfully a woman can imitate the ambitions of a fallen world.**

Every Christian wife should examine her own conduct before the LORD rather than allowing the failures of another person to determine whether she will obey Scripture. Does she demonstrate faithfulness, wisdom, discretion, and kindness? Does she respect the responsibilities God has established within marriage? Does she speak truthfully and seek the good of her household? Does she cultivate the inward character commended in First Peter 3, or has outward appearance become more important than inward holiness? Does she possess the fear of God praised in Proverbs 31? These questions concern personal obedience, not the performance of a husband. His failures remain his responsibility, and hers remain her own. At the same time, husbands must remember that Scripture commands them to love, nourish, cherish, understand, and honour their wives. The Christian home cannot be rightly ordered when one spouse quotes commandments at the other while refusing the commandments addressed to himself. **A marriage is not**

strengthened by two people becoming experts in each other's obligations while remaining strangers to their own.

The final measure of a Christian woman's spiritual standing is not her marital status but her relationship to Jesus Christ. Ephesians 2:8–9 declares, **"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast."** A wife is not saved through submission, a mother is not redeemed through childbirth, and an unmarried woman is not spiritually defective because she has no husband. Those who have trusted Jesus Christ are saved through His finished work, not through domestic accomplishments. Yet saving grace does not render Christian conduct unimportant. The redeemed woman is called to walk in obedience to the Word of God, exercising wisdom, displaying godliness, and fulfilling the responsibilities appropriate to her circumstances. Proverbs 31:31 concludes, **"Give her of the fruit of her hands; and let her own works praise her in the gates."** That is a fitting conclusion to the biblical portrait. A godly woman does not require rebellion to demonstrate strength, public applause to establish worth, or the humiliation of her husband to prove that she possesses wisdom. **The strongest Christian wife is not the woman who has learned how to rule everybody around her. She is the woman who fears Almighty God, knows His Word, walks in His truth, and possesses enough godly strength to obey Him when the world insists that obedience is weakness.**

6 of 10 – Marriage by the Book – Husbands, Love Your Wives: The Marriage That Pictures Christ and His Church

Key Passage: Ephesians 5:25–27 (KJV)

"Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish." — Ephesians 5:25–27

Introduction

There is a remarkable difference between the world's definition of love and the definition established by Almighty God. The world has turned love into a collection of feelings, romantic expressions, expensive gifts, sentimental music, and emotional excitement that may disappear as quickly as it arrived. According to that philosophy, a marriage is successful as long as two people continue making each other happy, and when the

excitement fades, the relationship has supposedly exhausted its purpose. Then we open the King James Bible to Ephesians 5:25 and discover something that exposes the poverty of that entire arrangement: **“Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it.”** Notice that the Apostle Paul does not direct the husband's attention toward romance, personal satisfaction, or the latest fashionable theory concerning relationships. He directs it toward Jesus Christ and His sacrifice for the Church. That is a considerably higher standard than remembering an anniversary or arriving home with flowers after behaving like a fool. **The world measures love by how much pleasure it receives; Scripture measures love by what it is willing to give.**

The passage is especially striking because it appears in the same chapter that establishes the husband's headship. Ephesians 5:23 declares, **“For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church.”** Certain men have memorized that verse with remarkable enthusiasm. They can quote it at breakfast, repeat it during an argument, and produce it whenever their wives express an opinion that differs from their own. Unfortunately, some of these same men appear to suffer a sudden interruption of their reading ability when they arrive at verse 25. The Apostle who established headship also commanded sacrificial love, and he did not insert a convenient exception for husbands who happen to be tired, irritated, disappointed, or occupied with something more entertaining. Biblical authority cannot be separated from biblical responsibility. The husband who wants the recognition belonging to his position must also accept the obligations attached to it. **A man who demands the privileges of headship while refusing the responsibilities of love has mistaken marriage for a throne and his wife for a servant.**

What makes Ephesians 5 particularly important is that Paul does more than provide practical instructions for maintaining a peaceful household. He reveals an extraordinary doctrinal relationship between earthly marriage and the spiritual union of Jesus Christ with His Church. Ephesians 5:32 declares, **“This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.”** That statement takes us beyond ordinary domestic arrangements into one of the great revelations entrusted to the Apostle Paul. The marriage established in Genesis becomes an illustration of the relationship between Christ and the body of believers joined to Him. Yet the doctrine must be rightly divided. Adam did not become a member of the New Testament Church when Eve was brought unto him, and the Church does not receive salvation through an earthly marriage ceremony. The historical institution and its later doctrinal significance must remain distinct. Nevertheless, the practical instruction is unmistakable. **A Christian husband is commanded to love his wife according to a standard that reaches all the way to Calvary.**

1. Husbands, Love Your Wives: The Command That Follows Headship

The first thing to notice about Ephesians 5:25 is that the command is addressed directly to husbands. **"Husbands, love your wives."** Paul does not instruct the wife to manufacture her husband's obedience through perfect behavior, nor does he make the husband's obligation dependent upon how successfully his wife fulfills every responsibility assigned to her. The command stands upon its own authority. The husband is responsible before God for loving his wife. The surrounding chapter concerns the Christian walk, including the command in verse 18 to **"be filled with the Spirit"** and the instruction in verse 21 concerning submission in the fear of God. Paul then addresses the particular responsibilities of wives and husbands. The distinctions are real, but neither spouse is authorized to ignore the commandments directed toward himself. A husband who continually examines his wife's submission while refusing to examine his own love has developed a very selective approach to Bible study. **The first responsibility of a Christian husband is not to become an expert on his wife's commandments, but to obey the commandments addressed to him.**

The expression **"your wives"** is also significant. The Apostle is discussing the actual woman joined to the man in marriage, not some imaginary creature possessing every desirable characteristic and none of the weaknesses common to fallen humanity. A husband may admire the qualities of other women, compare his wife unfavourably with carefully manufactured public appearances, or imagine that happiness would be guaranteed if only his circumstances were different. None of those thoughts removes the responsibility established by Ephesians 5:25. The command concerns his wife, with her particular strengths, limitations, responsibilities, and circumstances. Likewise, the wife is instructed concerning her own husband, not an idealized man who possesses the wisdom of Solomon without any of Solomon's mistakes. Marriage joins real people who remain accountable for their conduct. The husband cannot postpone obedience until his wife becomes the flawless individual he imagines she ought to be. **God did not command a man to love the woman he might have married under perfect circumstances. He commanded him to love the wife he actually has.**

This command also exposes the difference between biblical love and mere affection. Affection is valuable, and Scripture does not condemn the natural delight that belongs within marriage. Proverbs 5:18 instructs the husband to **"rejoice with the wife of thy youth."** But the love commanded in Ephesians 5 possesses a moral character that cannot be reduced to changing emotions. A man may experience discouragement, physical exhaustion, financial pressure, or disappointment without being released from his responsibility to act lovingly. He may have legitimate disagreements with his wife without

acquiring permission to treat her with bitterness. Colossians 3:19 declares, **“Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them.”** The command against bitterness is not suspended during difficult seasons. Love must govern conduct when feelings are pleasant and when they are not. **A marriage built entirely upon excitement will eventually discover that excitement is a poor carpenter, but obedience to God's Word establishes obligations that remain when emotions change.**

2. As Christ Loved the Church: Love Measured at Calvary

The standard established in Ephesians 5:25 is not merely that husbands should love their wives sincerely. Paul declares, **“even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it.”** Those final words identify the sacrificial character of Christ's love. He gave Himself. The emphasis falls upon the action of the Saviour, not upon the worthiness of those receiving His grace. Romans 5:8 declares, **“But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”** Notice the timing. Christ did not wait until sinners became righteous before demonstrating divine love. He died for the ungodly. Romans 5:6 states, **“For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.”** The death of Christ was not a sentimental performance intended to impress an audience. It was the substitutionary sacrifice through which redemption was accomplished. **Calvary proves that divine love is considerably more substantial than an emotional declaration spoken when everything happens to be pleasant.**

The doctrinal distinction must be preserved. Jesus Christ gave Himself as the sinless sacrifice for sinners, bearing their sins according to the Scriptures. First Corinthians 15:3 declares, **“that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures.”** First Peter 2:24 states that He **“bare our sins in his own body on the tree.”** No earthly husband can repeat that redeeming work. A man cannot wash away his wife's sins through personal sacrifice, secure her eternal salvation through his leadership, or become her mediator before God. First Timothy 2:5 declares, **“For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.”** The comparison in Ephesians concerns the character of sacrificial love, not the transfer of Christ's saving office to an earthly husband. This distinction protects the Gospel from religious confusion while preserving the tremendous force of Paul's instruction. **The husband is commanded to imitate Christ's self-giving love, not to imagine that marriage has promoted him into the office of Saviour.**

The application becomes painfully practical when examined honestly. A husband may announce that he would willingly die defending his wife, yet become irritated when asked to sacrifice an hour of personal convenience for her benefit. He may speak magnificently about protecting his household while refusing to assist when ordinary responsibilities become overwhelming. There is something almost comical about a fellow who imagines

himself charging into battle for his family but considers helping his exhausted wife an unreasonable interruption of his television programme. The battlefield of Christian obedience usually begins much closer to home. Philippians 2:4 declares, **“Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.”** The immediate instruction concerns Christian humility and conduct, but the principle applies powerfully within marriage. The husband must consider his wife's welfare rather than making his own comfort the permanent centre of household life. **The man who will not surrender his selfishness has little reason to boast about how much he would surrender for love.**

3. Sanctified and Cleansed: The Spiritual Reality Behind the Marriage Picture

Ephesians 5:26 continues the doctrinal explanation: **“That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word.”** The subject remains Jesus Christ and His Church. Paul is explaining the purpose and effects of the Saviour's work, not assigning a husband the ability to regenerate or spiritually cleanse his wife. This distinction is essential. The Church's cleansing is connected with Christ and His Word, not with the personal righteousness of earthly husbands. Titus 3:5 declares, **“Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.”** Salvation is not produced through domestic obedience, religious ceremonies, or the performance of moral duties. Neither should the reference to washing in Ephesians 5:26 be converted into a doctrine that water baptism purchases salvation. The passage identifies **“the washing of water by the word.”** The Word of God possesses an essential place in the believer's spiritual life.

The next verse reveals the glorious purpose: **“That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish”** (Ephesians 5:27). Here Paul directs attention toward the Church's glorious presentation to Christ. This is not a promise that every Christian marriage will become free from ordinary difficulties, aging, disagreement, or human weakness. The passage concerns the spiritual relationship between Christ and His Church, including the holiness and perfection associated with His completed purpose. Ephesians 1:13 declares that believers are sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise after hearing and believing the Gospel. Ephesians 4:30 identifies that sealing as lasting **“unto the day of redemption.”** The believer's security rests upon Christ, not the quality of marital performance. **A Christian husband may be responsible for leading his household in godliness, but he cannot manufacture the spotless Church that only Jesus Christ can present to Himself.**

Nevertheless, the spiritual reality carries a serious practical application. A husband who loves his wife should desire her spiritual welfare, not merely her usefulness to him. He

should encourage faithful Bible reading, sound doctrine, prayer, Christian fellowship, and obedience to the Lord. His example should strengthen rather than undermine her walk with God. Yet spiritual leadership is not achieved through intimidation, constant faultfinding, or the arrogant assumption that his interpretation of every domestic matter possesses divine authority. Second Timothy 2:15 commands the workman to study and rightly divide the word of truth, while Ephesians 4:15 instructs believers to speak **"the truth in love."** A man who employs Scripture to humiliate his wife has confused biblical instruction with personal domination. The Word of God should govern his conduct before he attempts to use it to govern hers. **A husband who wants his home filled with Scripture ought to begin by ensuring that the Scriptures have authority over the man holding the Bible.**

4. Nourishing and Cherishing: Love That Can Be Seen at Home

Ephesians 5:28 declares, **"So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself."** Paul returns to the one-flesh relationship established in Genesis and applies it directly to the husband's conduct. The husband and wife remain distinct persons, but marriage establishes a union that makes selfish disregard especially destructive. A man ordinarily concerns himself with his own food, rest, physical welfare, and personal interests. Scripture commands him to extend serious care toward the woman joined to him. The statement does not mean that every individual always treats his own body wisely, nor does it authorize a husband to decide what is best for his wife without listening to her. It establishes a principle of responsible concern. **A husband who faithfully cares for his own comfort while continually neglecting his wife's needs has demonstrated that he understands self-preservation considerably better than biblical marriage.** The command requires something more than occasional gestures performed before an appreciative audience.

Verse 29 develops the matter further: **"For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church."** The words *nourisheth* and *cherisheth* deserve attention because they describe more than financial provision. A husband may work diligently and still neglect affection, companionship, respect, and consideration. Providing necessities is important, but the responsibilities of love extend beyond paying bills. First Peter 3:7 commands husbands to dwell with their wives according to knowledge and to give them honour. That requires paying attention to the actual woman with whom the man shares his life. Her concerns are not automatically foolish because they differ from his. Her weariness does not disappear because he has also worked hard. Her judgment does not become worthless because Scripture identifies the husband as the head. **The man who believes he has fulfilled every marital obligation**

by bringing home a paycheck has confused the responsibilities of a husband with the duties of an employer.

Nourishing and cherishing also exclude cruelty, manipulation, and intimidation. A husband cannot claim to love his wife while deliberately making her afraid of him. He cannot invoke biblical headship to excuse threats, physical violence, coercion, sexual mistreatment, or calculated humiliation. Colossians 3:19 commands husbands not to be bitter against their wives, while First Peter 3:7 requires honour and warns concerning hindered prayers. Those commandments possess as much divine authority as Ephesians 5:23. Nor does biblical love require a wife to conceal serious wrongdoing or remain in immediate danger. Seeking protection and appropriate assistance does not become sinful because the offender happens to be her husband. Love must be measured by Scripture rather than by the demands of the person claiming authority. **A man cannot nourish his wife with one hand, threaten her with the other, and then expect the Bible to congratulate him upon his excellent leadership.** The Word of God is not impressed by contradictions dressed in religious language.

5. Charity Suffereth Long: The Love That Refuses to Worship Self

First Corinthians 13 provides one of the most searching descriptions of biblical charity found anywhere in Scripture. The immediate context concerns spiritual gifts and conduct within the Corinthian assembly, not a wedding ceremony. Paul is correcting believers whose spiritual activities had become contaminated by pride, rivalry, and disorder. Yet the principles concerning charity apply directly to Christian marriage. Verse 4 declares, **"Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up."** Longsuffering and kindness belong together. A husband who endures difficulties while continually making his wife miserable through contempt has not fulfilled the verse merely because he has remained physically present. Likewise, a wife who claims patience while storing resentment for future retaliation has not demonstrated charity. Biblical love does not require pretending that sin is harmless, but it does forbid turning every ordinary fault into an opportunity for revenge. **A person who keeps a perfect record of another's mistakes while conveniently forgetting his own has mistaken marriage for an accounting department.**

Verse 5 continues, **"Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil."** These expressions strike directly at selfishness, rude conduct, angry reactions, and the habit of interpreting every disagreement through suspicion. Charity does not behave disgracefully while claiming that strong emotions justify the performance. It does not insist that every household decision must produce personal advantage. It does not eagerly assume the worst possible motive whenever a

spouse speaks imperfectly or makes an honest mistake. But **“thinketh no evil”** does not command blindness toward proven wickedness, and charity must never become an excuse for concealing abuse or refusing necessary correction. Verse 6 settles that question by declaring, **“Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth.”** Genuine love cannot rejoice in wrongdoing. It is neither suspicious without reason nor dishonest about actual sin. **The love that Scripture commands possesses enough patience to overlook ordinary irritation and enough integrity to confront what God calls evil.**

First Corinthians 13:7 declares that charity **“Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.”** These expressions describe the perseverance of genuine charity, not a requirement to accept every falsehood or remain exposed to continuing harm. Scripture never commands Christians to believe lies, excuse violence, or call unrighteousness good. Charity perseveres in righteousness because it is governed by truth. Verse 8 concludes, **“Charity never faileth.”** Paul is contrasting the enduring character of charity with spiritual gifts that would cease or pass away according to the development of his argument. The statement must not be twisted into a guarantee that every earthly marriage will remain free from human failure. Its practical challenge is nevertheless tremendous. Husbands and wives should cultivate patience, kindness, faithfulness, humility, and truthfulness because these qualities belong to biblical charity. **The world's sentimental love asks how long a person can remain entertained. Biblical charity asks whether a person will continue doing right when obedience becomes inconvenient.**

6. By This Shall All Men Know: Marriage and the Christian Testimony

John 13:34 records the Lord Jesus Christ declaring, **“A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.”** The historical setting is the Lord's instruction to His disciples before His crucifixion. He was not conducting a marriage seminar, and the passage should not be misrepresented as though it were addressed exclusively to husbands and wives. Nevertheless, its command concerning love establishes a standard for those who belong to Christ. The Lord directs His disciples toward His own example. John 15:12 repeats the command, **“That ye love one another, as I have loved you.”** Christian love therefore possesses a foundation beyond personality, convenience, and mutual advantage. A saved husband and wife are not exempt from the general commandments governing Christian conduct merely because they share a household. **Marriage does not provide a private exemption from the commandments of Jesus Christ, and the front door of a house is not the boundary beyond which Christian charity ceases to operate.**

John 13:35 continues, **“By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.”** The immediate application concerns the testimony of Christ's disciples, but the principle has serious implications for Christian homes. Children observe how their parents treat one another. Relatives notice whether religious profession agrees with ordinary conduct. Fellow believers may witness the difference between genuine affection and the polished appearances maintained for public admiration. A husband who speaks magnificently about Christian doctrine while continually humiliating his wife undermines the testimony he claims to defend. A wife who publicly praises biblical marriage while privately practicing bitterness and deceit does the same. Neither person's conduct changes the truth of Scripture, but hypocrisy gives unbelievers another occasion to mock those who profess it. **A family Bible displayed prominently in the living room is a poor substitute for biblical conduct practiced by the people living there.** Christianity must function beyond the church building.

The practical requirements are especially plain in Ephesians 4:29: **“Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.”** The command was addressed to believers generally, but it belongs in every Christian household. Sarcasm designed to wound, public humiliation, continual accusations, and words spoken merely to provoke anger cannot be defended as harmless personal habits. Verse 32 adds, **“And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.”** Forgiveness does not eliminate accountability or require that serious wrongdoing be concealed, but resentment cannot become the permanent government of a Christian home. Husbands and wives should acknowledge their sins, speak truthfully, seek reconciliation where possible, and refuse the pride that turns minor disagreements into lasting hostilities. **A man who can speak graciously to strangers but cannot address his wife without contempt has not mastered Christian communication; he has merely learned where to conceal his disobedience.**

7. This Is a Great Mystery: The Marriage That Points Beyond Eden

Ephesians 5:31 brings the reader back to Genesis: **“For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh.”** Paul deliberately repeats the creation principle concerning marriage. Adam and Eve were joined before the entrance of sin, before the establishment of Israel as a nation, before the giving of the Mosaic law, and long before the revelation of the New Testament Church. Marriage therefore belongs to the original creation order. Yet Ephesians 5 reveals a doctrinal significance that was not fully disclosed in Genesis. The historical institution becomes an illustration of the relationship between Christ and His Church. That does not

require pretending that Adam understood the complete Pauline revelation or that Old Testament Israel was secretly the same spiritual organism as the body of Christ. **Rightly dividing the Word of truth means allowing Genesis to establish what happened in Eden while allowing Ephesians to reveal what God later made known concerning the Church.**

Ephesians 5:32 declares, **"This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church."** The mystery concerns Christ and His Church, not merely the emotional experience of a husband and wife. Ephesians 1:22–23 identifies the Church as Christ's body, while Ephesians 5:30 declares, **"For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones."** First Corinthians 12:13 explains that believers are baptized by one Spirit into one body. These are spiritual realities accomplished through God's saving work, not through an earthly wedding ceremony. Israel's national covenants, earthly promises, and historical calling must not be confused with the Church's spiritual position in Christ. Likewise, the one-flesh union of marriage should not be mistaken for the believer's spiritual union with the risen Saviour. The earthly relationship illustrates divine truth without becoming identical to it. **A picture is valuable because of what it represents, but the picture must never be confused with the Person whose glory it displays.**

Paul concludes the discussion in Ephesians 5:33 by returning directly to the responsibilities of husband and wife: **"Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband."** Notice the movement. The Apostle has lifted the reader from the creation of Eve to the sacrifice of Christ, from the one-flesh union to the mystery of the Church, and from the marriage relationship to the glorious purposes of redemption. Then he returns to the ordinary husband and wife with commandments they must obey. Doctrine is not given merely to furnish material for religious discussion. It is intended to govern conduct. The husband must love, and the wife must reverence her husband according to the divine order. Neither command turns marriage into a means of earning salvation. Ephesians 2:8–9 establishes salvation by grace through faith, not of works. **The mystery reaches into Heaven, but the obedience required by its illustration must be demonstrated in the home.**

Conclusion

The greatest standard of marital love in the New Testament is not found in an emotional declaration, a romantic tradition, or a collection of human theories concerning happiness. It is found in the words of Ephesians 5:25: **"Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it."** That command places the Christian husband beneath a solemn responsibility. He is not instructed merely to maintain

authority, provide financial support, or preserve the outward appearance of a respectable household. He is commanded to love his wife according to the sacrificial example of Jesus Christ. The passage also reveals the extraordinary spiritual truth concerning Christ and His Church, demonstrating that marriage possesses significance beyond the immediate circumstances of earthly companionship. Yet the comparison does not make an earthly husband a saviour or his wife an object of worship. It reveals the seriousness of the relationship and the character of love required within it. **God did not establish marriage so that a selfish man could acquire a permanent servant. He established a union in which love must be demonstrated through faithfulness, sacrifice, and obedience to His Word.**

The practical examination is unavoidable. Does a husband nourish and cherish his wife, or does he provide only enough attention to maintain his own comfort? Does he listen with consideration, or does he treat every difference of opinion as an attack upon his authority? Does he demonstrate patience when circumstances become difficult, or does bitterness govern his words? Does he protect his wife's dignity, or does he use private knowledge as ammunition during disagreements? Does he lead his household toward the Scriptures while submitting his own conduct to their authority? These questions concern obedience, not religious appearances. A wife also bears responsibility for her conduct, but her obligations do not excuse the husband's failures. Both must answer to God. The marriage relationship is not strengthened when either spouse becomes an expert at quoting the other's commandments while neglecting personal obedience. **The most dangerous man in a Christian household is not necessarily the one who knows nothing about biblical headship; it may be the one who knows the verses well enough to demand authority but refuses to read far enough to discover his responsibilities.**

The final consideration takes us back to the Lord Jesus Christ. Romans 5:8 declares that God commended His love toward us while we were yet sinners, and Christ died for us. The believer's salvation rests upon that finished sacrifice, not upon the success of an earthly marriage. Yet those who have been redeemed should demonstrate the grace they have received through their conduct toward others, especially within the household where selfishness is so easily exposed. A Christian husband ought to love his wife faithfully, cherish her sincerely, honour her consistently, and recognize that his responsibility exists beneath the authority of Almighty God. A Christian wife ought to fulfil her own biblical obligations without allowing the world's rebellion to determine her conduct. Together, they should seek a marriage governed by truth rather than appearances, charity rather than selfishness, and obedience rather than human pride. **The world may measure marriage by the excitement of the wedding, the beauty of the home, or the happiness displayed before strangers. God has given a higher measure. When a husband opens Ephesians 5 and

reads that Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for it, he is standing before a standard that exposes

7 of 10 – Marriage by the Book – The Tongue in the Home: Communication That Builds Instead of Destroys

Key Passage: James 1:19–20 (KJV)

“Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath: For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.” — James 1:19–20

Introduction

There is a little member of the human body that has destroyed more peace in Christian homes than financial trouble, difficult relatives, and the ordinary burdens of life combined. It weighs practically nothing, requires no ammunition, needs no special training, and can accomplish an astonishing amount of damage before breakfast. The Bible calls it the tongue. Proverbs 18:21 declares, **“Death and life are in the power of the tongue: and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof.”** That is not sentimental poetry written to decorate a marriage seminar. It is divine wisdom identifying the tremendous consequences of human speech. A husband and wife may agree upon every major doctrine in the King James Bible, attend the same church, defend the same convictions, and still make their household miserable because neither has learned when to open his mouth and when to keep it closed. They can explain the difference between Israel and the Church, discuss the coming of the Lord, and identify false doctrine from fifty paces, yet somehow remain completely bewildered by the biblical command to speak kindly to the person sitting across the dinner table. **A man who can rightly divide the dispensations but cannot govern his tongue at home has discovered a serious division between what he knows and how he lives.**

The tragedy is that words possess a peculiar ability to accomplish damage that cannot always be repaired by a quick apology. A foolish statement may be spoken in three seconds and remembered for thirty years. A husband may ridicule his wife before others and then wonder why the laughter he enjoyed has produced bitterness in the woman he was commanded to cherish. A wife may continually belittle her husband, rehearse his failures, and question his character until ordinary conversation becomes an exercise in self-defense. The home that ought to provide companionship becomes a courtroom where

every sentence is examined for ammunition and every disagreement requires somebody to emerge victorious. James 3:5 declares, **“Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth!”** There is the picture. A spark appears insignificant until the building is burning. Some married people have spent years pouring verbal gasoline upon their relationship and then express complete astonishment when the atmosphere becomes unbearable. **The tongue is small enough to hide behind the teeth and dangerous enough to set an entire household on fire.**

The answer is not another collection of fashionable communication techniques that carefully avoids the real problem. Scripture identifies the trouble as sin and commands believers to govern their speech according to the Word of God. James 1:19 instructs Christians to be **“swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath.”** Ephesians 4:29 forbids corrupt communication and commands speech that edifies. Proverbs 15:1 contrasts a soft answer with grievous words. Colossians 4:6 commands speech seasoned with grace. These passages were not originally written as a specialized manual for marriage, but their requirements apply wherever Christians speak, and that certainly includes the household. A wedding ceremony does not provide an exemption from Christian conduct. Neither does familiarity with another person authorize cruelty that would be recognized immediately as disgraceful if directed toward a stranger. The married believer remains responsible before God for every careless accusation, dishonest explanation, bitter insult, and deliberate attempt to wound another person. **A Christian home does not need two people who have mastered the art of winning arguments. It needs two people who fear God enough to stop using their tongues as weapons.**

1. Death and Life Are in the Power of the Tongue

Proverbs 18:21 provides the foundational warning: **“Death and life are in the power of the tongue: and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof.”** The statement belongs to the wisdom literature of the Old Testament and must be understood according to its subject. Solomon is not teaching that human beings possess divine creative power through spoken declarations, nor that a Christian can manufacture wealth, health, or salvation merely by pronouncing certain words. That sort of religious foolishness turns biblical wisdom into verbal sorcery. The verse concerns the serious consequences of speech. Words can encourage or discourage, expose truth or spread deception, preserve relationships or destroy confidence. Proverbs 18:20 declares, **“A man's belly shall be satisfied with the fruit of his mouth; and with the increase of his lips shall he be filled.”** Speech produces consequences, and the speaker may eventually receive the fruit of what he has continually

sown. **Words are not magic, but they are never morally insignificant merely because they are invisible after being spoken.**

The Lord Jesus Christ identified the deeper source of human speech in Matthew 12:34: **"for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh."** His immediate words were addressed to religious opponents whose corrupt speech exposed the condition of their hearts. The principle reveals why controlling the tongue requires more than learning polite expressions. A bitter heart will eventually produce bitter speech. Pride will reveal itself through boasting, contempt, and unwillingness to acknowledge wrongdoing. Jealousy will search for accusations, while resentment will discover fresh reasons to revive old injuries. A husband who continually humiliates his wife cannot excuse the practice by claiming that he merely speaks plainly. A wife who regularly wounds her husband cannot make the conduct righteous by announcing that she is simply being honest. The heart determines what the mouth is eager to release. **A dirty spring cannot produce clean water merely because somebody paints a religious quotation on the pump.**

This is why Christian communication must begin with personal accountability before God. Proverbs 4:23 commands, **"Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life."** Although that instruction belongs to Israel's wisdom literature, the moral principle agrees with the New Testament's commands concerning inward holiness and outward conduct. Ephesians 4:22 instructs believers to put off the old man, which is corrupt according to deceitful lusts, and verse 24 commands them to put on the new man. The Christian is not merely instructed to improve his public manners while preserving private wickedness. He is called to walk according to his new position in Christ. A tongue continually governed by bitterness indicates conduct that requires correction, not admiration for its supposed boldness. **The problem in many Christian homes is not that the occupants lack sufficient vocabulary. It is that they possess more words than self-control and more opinions than charity.**

2. Swift to Hear: The Discipline of Listening Before Speaking

James 1:19 begins with a command that ought to embarrass some of the most talkative people in Christianity: **"let every man be swift to hear."** The immediate context concerns receiving the Word of God, and verse 21 instructs believers to receive with meekness the engrafted word. The command to hear therefore possesses a serious spiritual setting. Yet the principle naturally applies to the ordinary relationships of Christian life. A believer who refuses to listen carefully before answering demonstrates the same impatience that makes him difficult to instruct. Proverbs 18:13 declares, **"He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him."** That verse has probably condemned more marital arguments than most people care to admit. A husband hears half a sentence,

assumes he knows the remainder, and begins correcting something his wife never actually said. A wife interprets a remark according to a previous disagreement and responds to an accusation her husband never intended. **Some arguments last two hours because neither person was willing to listen for two minutes.**

Listening does not mean pretending that every opinion expressed by a spouse is automatically correct. The Bible requires discernment as well as patience. Proverbs 18:17 declares, **"He that is first in his own cause seemeth just; but his neighbour cometh and searcheth him."** The principle warns against accepting the first account of a matter without examination. Within marriage, it also cautions against assuming that one's own understanding is complete before hearing the other person's explanation. A husband responsible for leadership should seek accurate information rather than treating questions as challenges to his position. A wife should not interpret every disagreement as proof that her husband has deliberately disregarded her. Both should distinguish what was actually said from what they imagine was intended. Asking for clarification is not weakness, and listening patiently is not surrender. **The person who cannot bear to hear another explanation is often more interested in preserving an opinion than discovering the truth.**

There is also a difference between hearing words and listening with genuine consideration. A man may remain physically silent while mentally preparing his next attack. A woman may allow her husband to finish speaking while privately rehearsing every accusation she intends to deliver afterward. That is not the patience commended by Scripture. James instructs believers to be swift to hear and slow to speak because wise responses require understanding. Proverbs 15:28 declares, **"The heart of the righteous studieth to answer: but the mouth of the wicked poureth out evil things."** Notice the contrast between studying an answer and pouring out words. The first involves consideration; the second describes uncontrolled expression. Married people should give one another enough attention to understand legitimate concerns before deciding how to respond. **The goal of listening is not to discover the weakest part of another person's argument. It is to understand what must be answered truthfully, fairly, and according to Scripture.**

3. Slow to Wrath: When Anger Takes Control of the Conversation

James 1:20 supplies the reason for the preceding command: **"For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God."** There is a statement that destroys the fashionable idea that every expression of anger becomes justified merely because the angry person feels strongly about it. Human wrath does not manufacture divine righteousness. A husband may raise his voice until the furniture appears ready to surrender, but the volume of his argument does not establish its truth. A wife may become

increasingly furious because her husband refuses to accept her interpretation, yet the intensity of her feelings does not transform her position into Scripture. Ecclesiastes 7:9 warns, **“Be not hasty in thy spirit to be angry: for anger resteth in the bosom of fools.”** The statement is not complicated. Anger can become a comfortable residence for foolishness when a person repeatedly chooses indignation over wisdom. **The loudest person in the room has not necessarily won the argument; he may simply have demonstrated who has lost control of himself.**

Ephesians 4:26 adds an important distinction: **“Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath.”** The verse recognizes that anger and sinful conduct are not identical in every circumstance. There are things that ought to provoke righteous concern, particularly deliberate wickedness, injustice, and serious wrongdoing. Nevertheless, anger must not become permission for threats, insults, violence, or revenge. Verse 27 immediately warns, **“Neither give place to the devil.”** The believer who allows wrath to govern his conduct creates an occasion for further sin. The instruction concerning the sun going down emphasizes that wrath should not be nursed and deliberately preserved. It does not require a couple to complete every difficult discussion before midnight regardless of exhaustion or safety. Sometimes a brief interruption permits both people to regain composure before continuing honestly. **There is a considerable difference between refusing to cherish resentment and demanding an argument continue until somebody collapses from exhaustion.**

Proverbs 15:1 declares, **“A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger.”** A soft answer is not necessarily a weak answer. It may contain firm correction, necessary disagreement, or an uncomfortable truth expressed without unnecessary hostility. The contrast concerns the manner in which speech affects conflict. Grievous words stir anger because they introduce fresh injury into an already difficult situation. Some people appear determined to discover the precise expression that will irritate their spouse most effectively, and then employ it whenever an argument begins to lose momentum. That is not courage. It is foolishness with an extensive vocabulary. Neither should a spouse employ prolonged, punitive silence as a means of humiliation or control. Temporary quietness can prevent sinful speech; deliberate withdrawal designed to punish another person merely changes the weapon. **A Christian does not become righteous by exchanging shouted insults for calculated contempt. Both practices can reveal a heart unwilling to obey God.**

4. Speaking Truth Without Turning It Into a Weapon

Ephesians 4:25 declares, **“Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another.”** Paul addresses believers concerning

their conduct as members of Christ's body. The immediate doctrine concerns Christian fellowship, but a saved husband and wife certainly do not receive permission to practice deception within marriage. Honesty is foundational to confidence between spouses. Concealed financial obligations, dishonest explanations, secret communications, false accusations, and deliberate omissions intended to deceive all undermine trust. Yet telling the truth does not mean saying everything that enters the mind without consideration. Ephesians 4:15 speaks of **"speaking the truth in love."** Both elements belong together. Truth without charity can become an instrument of cruelty, while affection without truth becomes an excuse for deception. **The Bible never commands a Christian to choose between honesty and kindness. It commands him to practice both, and personal irritation does not cancel either obligation.**

Ephesians 4:29 develops the matter further: **"Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers."** The word *edifying* directs attention toward building up rather than tearing down. It does not require perpetual compliments, flattery, or the avoidance of necessary correction. Scripture frequently rebukes sin directly. But correction should possess a righteous purpose rather than being delivered merely to embarrass or injure. A husband may need to address a genuine problem without attacking his wife's intelligence, appearance, family background, or personal worth. A wife may need to confront her husband's conduct without announcing that he is incapable of doing anything correctly. The subject under discussion should remain the subject under discussion. **When a disagreement concerns an unpaid bill, dragging fifteen years of unrelated failures into the conversation does not demonstrate superior memory. It demonstrates that somebody has arrived with a shovel to enlarge the hole.**

The command against corrupt communication also condemns the deliberate use of contempt disguised as humour. There is nothing inherently sinful about affectionate humour, harmless teasing, or the ordinary laughter that makes companionship enjoyable. But sarcasm intended to humiliate another person is not sanctified because somebody calls it a joke. Proverbs 26:18–19 describes a man who deceives his neighbour and then says, **"Am not I in sport?"** The passage exposes the wickedness of concealing harmful behavior beneath the excuse of amusement. A husband who publicly ridicules his wife cannot erase the humiliation by declaring that everybody should learn to laugh. A wife who repeatedly embarrasses her husband before friends cannot justify contempt by insisting that he is too sensitive. **A joke becomes considerably less amusing when its principal purpose is to make the person nearest to you feel small.** The Christian tongue should be capable of producing laughter without requiring another person's dignity as the price of admission.

5. The Public Tongue: Gossip, Exposure, and the Destruction of Trust

Proverbs 11:13 declares, **"A talebearer revealeth secrets: but he that is of a faithful spirit concealeth the matter."** The passage concerns the moral difference between a person who betrays confidence and one who can be trusted. Marriage necessarily involves private knowledge, personal weaknesses, financial circumstances, family concerns, and conversations that should not become public entertainment. A husband ought not to expose his wife's ordinary faults merely to obtain laughter or sympathy from friends. A wife should not turn every disagreement into a public accusation designed to recruit supporters against her husband. Proverbs 16:28 warns, **"A froward man soweth strife: and a whisperer separateth chief friends."** If whispering can separate friends, imagine what continual gossip can accomplish within marriage. **A person who repeatedly carries private grievances into public conversation should not be surprised when trust eventually refuses to return home.**

This warning is particularly relevant in an age when people can distribute their personal grievances to hundreds or thousands of strangers almost instantly. A disagreement that once remained within the household may now become a public performance, complete with accusations, emotional commentary, selective evidence, and an audience eager to declare somebody guilty. The person publishing the complaint may receive temporary attention while the marriage suffers lasting damage. Proverbs 25:9 declares, **"Debate thy cause with thy neighbour himself; and discover not a secret to another."** The surrounding passage warns concerning the consequences of betraying confidences. Christian discretion requires wisdom about what should be discussed privately and what genuinely requires outside assistance. There is no virtue in exposing ordinary household difficulties merely to entertain spectators. **The marriage altar was never intended to become a public platform where two people invite strangers to vote upon their latest disagreement.**

Nevertheless, biblical discretion must not be twisted into a command to conceal abuse, violence, threats, exploitation, or serious wrongdoing. Scripture condemns false witness and malicious gossip, but it does not command an injured person to remain silent when protection and legitimate help are necessary. Proverbs 31:8 instructs, **"Open thy mouth for the dumb in the cause of all such as are appointed to destruction."** The immediate context concerns the responsibility to speak for those unable to defend themselves, and its moral principle contradicts the notion that silence is always righteous. Seeking lawful protection, reliable pastoral assistance, or appropriate counsel is not equivalent to spreading gossip for revenge. Likewise, a husband or wife who commits serious wrongdoing cannot demand secrecy merely to preserve a respectable public image.

Protecting legitimate privacy is righteous; protecting wickedness from necessary accountability is another matter altogether. The distinction is determined by truth, purpose, and obedience to God, not by the convenience of the person who wants the matter concealed.

6. Words That Minister Grace: Correction, Encouragement, and Forgiveness

Colossians 4:6 declares, **"Let your speech be alway with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man."** The immediate context includes Paul's instruction to walk in wisdom toward those without, making proper use of opportunities to speak. The command should not be removed from that setting. Nevertheless, the principle concerning gracious speech certainly does not become less important when the hearer happens to be a husband or wife. Grace does not require the speaker to avoid truth, and salt does not mean that every conversation must become unpleasant. Speech seasoned properly possesses both substance and restraint. A Christian may correct wrongdoing without becoming cruel, express disappointment without attacking character, and acknowledge disagreement without declaring personal warfare. **Some people imagine they are seasoning their words with salt when they have actually emptied the entire container into an open wound.** Biblical speech must be governed by wisdom, not merely by the speaker's desire to express irritation.

Proverbs 16:24 declares, **"Pleasant words are as an honeycomb, sweet to the soul, and health to the bones."** The proverb does not promise miraculous physical healing whenever a husband compliments his wife. It illustrates the refreshing and beneficial effect of gracious speech. Proverbs 25:11 similarly declares, **"A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver."** Notice the importance of suitability. A word spoken at the proper time, in the proper manner, for the proper purpose can accomplish tremendous good. A husband should recognize his wife's faithfulness, diligence, wisdom, and ordinary sacrifices. A wife should express appreciation for her husband's honest labor, responsibility, consideration, and godly conduct. Encouragement should not be reserved exclusively for strangers, church members, or people whose approval we hope to obtain. **It is a strange form of Christianity that distributes kindness generously throughout the community while requiring the family to survive upon the leftovers.**

Ephesians 4:31–32 gives the necessary instruction for dealing with offenses: **"Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."** Notice that forgiveness appears alongside the rejection of bitterness and evil speaking. A husband who admits wrongdoing should not merely say whatever words will end the argument while intending to

continue the same conduct. A wife who seeks forgiveness should likewise acknowledge the actual offense rather than disguising it beneath excuses. Genuine repentance requires honesty, and forgiveness does not eliminate the need to restore damaged confidence through faithful conduct. The passage also condemns the practice of continually reopening settled offenses for personal advantage. **Forgiveness is not pretending sin never happened, but neither is it preserving every forgiven offense in a private museum so it can be displayed during the next disagreement.**

7. The Tongue Before God: Christian Speech and Eternal Accountability

James 3:6 presents one of the strongest warnings concerning speech in the New Testament: **"And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity."** The passage continues by describing the tongue's destructive influence upon the whole course of life. James is addressing the brethren, having warned in verse 1 against becoming many masters because of the greater condemnation associated with teaching responsibility. The discussion then broadens to the difficulty of governing speech. Verse 8 declares, **"But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison."** The statement exposes human weakness and destroys confidence in mere self-discipline as though fallen mankind could perfect itself through determination alone. Yet James does not thereby excuse uncontrolled speech. The warning demonstrates how seriously believers must regard the danger. **If the Holy Ghost compares the tongue to a fire and deadly poison, the Christian ought to hesitate before congratulating himself upon his talent for speaking his mind.**

James 3:9–10 exposes a contradiction especially relevant to professing Christians: **"Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God. Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be."** Consider the application. A husband sings hymns during the church service and then spends the afternoon speaking contemptuously to his wife. A wife praises the goodness of God publicly and then uses her tongue to humiliate her husband privately. Both may claim that their Christian profession remains unaffected by domestic conduct. James says otherwise. The tongue that blesses God must not become an instrument of wickedness against human beings made in His likeness. The passage does not teach that a believer loses salvation through a sinful statement, but it plainly condemns the inconsistency. **A mouth that can sing about the love of Christ ought to be capable of speaking with charity after the final hymn has ended.**

The believer's accountability gives this subject additional seriousness. Second Corinthians 5:10 declares, **"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every**

one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." This concerns the Christian's accountability before Christ and must not be confused with the Great White Throne judgment of Revelation 20. Neither should it be converted into salvation by works. Ephesians 2:8–9 establishes that salvation is by grace through faith, and the believer's eternal security rests upon Jesus Christ. Nevertheless, grace does not remove accountability for conduct. A saved husband remains responsible for his words, and a saved wife remains responsible for hers. Psalm 141:3 offers an appropriate prayer: **"Set a watch, O LORD, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips." The Christian who remembers that his speech is heard by Almighty God may become considerably less eager to win an argument through words he will later regret.**

Conclusion

The biblical instruction concerning speech is neither obscure nor insufficient. James commands believers to be swift to hear, slow to speak, and slow to wrath. Proverbs warns that death and life are in the power of the tongue. Ephesians forbids corrupt communication and commands speech that ministers grace. Colossians requires words seasoned with wisdom, while James 3 exposes the terrible inconsistency of blessing God and cursing human beings. These passages were given in their respective historical and doctrinal settings, but their testimony concerning righteous speech is unmistakable. Marriage does not excuse the violation of commandments that govern Christian conduct. A husband cannot defend verbal cruelty through an appeal to headship, and a wife cannot excuse contempt through an appeal to disappointment. Both must submit their speech to the authority of the Word of God. **A Christian marriage does not require two people who never disagree. It requires two people who understand that disagreement is not permission to sin against one another.**

The practical consequences reach into nearly every part of married life. A husband should listen before answering, correct without humiliation, encourage without flattery, and refuse the temptation to employ authority as an excuse for harshness. A wife should speak truthfully, exercise discretion, address genuine problems without contempt, and refrain from recruiting outsiders into ordinary disagreements. Both should reject lying, gossip, revenge, bitterness, and the habit of turning every conversation into a contest for personal superiority. They should admit wrongdoing without manufacturing excuses and seek forgiveness without treating repentance as a meaningless formality. Where serious sin or danger exists, truth and appropriate accountability must not be sacrificed to preserve appearances. But where ordinary disagreements arise, patience and charity should govern the discussion. **The strongest marriage is not the one in which both people have become skilled at delivering the final word. It is the one in which both have learned**

that obedience to God matters more than personal victory. The tongue that once produced humiliation can instead speak words of encouragement, truth, gratitude, and necessary correction.

The final issue reaches beyond communication itself to the condition of the Christian heart. A person cannot continually nourish bitterness, pride, resentment, and selfishness while expecting righteous speech to appear automatically whenever the household becomes difficult. The inward life must be brought beneath the authority of Scripture. Colossians 3:16 declares, **"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom."** Ephesians 5:18 commands believers to be filled with the Spirit. These are not instructions reserved for public worship or religious meetings. Their influence should reach the kitchen, the dinner table, the bedroom, the family automobile, and every ordinary conversation in which a husband and wife encounter the responsibilities of life. The Lord who hears prayer also hears the words spoken when nobody else is present. The God who established marriage has not surrendered His authority over the mouths of those who enter it. Proverbs 18:21 remains true: **"Death and life are in the power of the tongue."** A husband and wife cannot control every trial that enters their home, but they are responsible for the words they choose when those trials arrive. **A careless tongue can turn a peaceful house into a battlefield, but a tongue governed by the Word of God can speak truth without cruelty, correction without contempt, and love without hypocrisy. The Christian home needs fewer winning arguments and more obedient mouths.**

8 of 10 – Marriage by the Book – The Marriage Bed Undefiled: Intimacy, Affection, and Faithfulness

Key Passage: Hebrews 13:4 (KJV)

"Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge." — Hebrews 13:4

Introduction

There is something remarkably dishonest about a world that advertises sexual immorality on practically every available surface while acting astonished when somebody opens a King James Bible and explains what Almighty God actually says about physical intimacy. The same society that has turned fornication into entertainment, adultery into romance, and lust into a commercial industry suddenly becomes terribly concerned about modesty whenever Scripture enters the conversation. But Hebrews 13:4 does not stammer,

apologize, or request permission from the modern guardians of acceptable opinion. **“Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.”** There is God's distinction in one sentence. Marriage is honourable. The marriage bed is undefiled. Sexual immorality remains subject to divine judgment. The Bible does not condemn the physical relationship God established between husband and wife, and it certainly does not approve the counterfeit arrangements that fallen humanity has invented outside it. **God created the marriage bed, and the devil has spent centuries attempting either to defile it or to convince religious people that God must be embarrassed by His own creation.**

The physical relationship between husband and wife did not originate in a sinful imagination, a worldly entertainment industry, or the corrupt customs of some ancient civilization. It belongs to the marriage institution established by God before Adam and Eve committed their first transgression. Genesis 2:24 declares, **“Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.”** The following verse records that the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed. That was before the serpent's deception, before Adam's disobedience, and before death entered the human experience through sin. The original marriage relationship was not a shameful arrangement that God reluctantly tolerated because human beings required reproduction. It was part of His good creation. Sin subsequently corrupted human desires and behavior, but sin did not create the marriage relationship. The distinction is essential. **The existence of counterfeit money does not make genuine currency worthless, and the world's corruption of intimacy does not make God's original institution unclean.**

Two opposite errors must therefore be rejected. One treats sexual intimacy as something inherently dirty, spiritually inferior, or unworthy of serious biblical instruction. The other treats physical desire as an authority unto itself, capable of justifying almost anything a person happens to want. Neither position agrees with Scripture. Hebrews 13:4 honours marriage while condemning whoredom and adultery. First Corinthians 7 establishes mutual responsibilities between husband and wife. Proverbs 5 directs marital affection toward the lawful spouse while warning against the strange woman. The Song of Solomon celebrates exclusive affection within its poetic setting, while First Thessalonians 4 commands sanctification and abstinence from fornication. These passages must be understood in their proper contexts, but together they establish a consistent distinction between lawful marital intimacy and sinful lust. **The Bible is neither embarrassed by marriage nor impressed with immorality. It gives the marriage bed its proper honour and places human desire beneath the authority of Almighty God.**

1. Marriage Is Honourable in All: God's Approval of the Marriage Bed

Hebrews 13:4 begins with a declaration that deserves more attention than it ordinarily receives: **"Marriage is honourable in all."** The writer does not describe marriage as an unfortunate concession to human weakness or a second-class arrangement suitable only for Christians who lack sufficient spiritual discipline to remain unmarried. Marriage is honourable. That statement agrees with Genesis 2, where God Himself established the first union, and with Matthew 19:6, where the Lord Jesus Christ declared, **"What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder."** The institution possesses divine authority because its foundation rests upon the Creator. Marriage existed before the giving of the Mosaic law, before Israel became a nation, and before the revelation of the New Testament Church. Its honourable character does not depend upon human civilization's approval. **A government may regulate marriage, a preacher may conduct a ceremony, and a family may celebrate the occasion, but none of them invented what Almighty God established in Eden.**

The next expression is equally plain: **"and the bed undefiled."** The Bible is speaking approvingly of the lawful physical relationship belonging to husband and wife. There is no suggestion that married Christians must regard normal marital intimacy as an unfortunate contamination of spiritual life. God created the human body, established the distinction between male and female, and provided the marriage relationship within which physical union is honourable. First Timothy 4:3 warns against false teachers **"Forbidding to marry,"** identifying such prohibition among the errors associated with departure from the faith. That warning does not mean every believer is required to marry, for First Corinthians 7 recognizes the advantages of remaining unmarried in appropriate circumstances. It means marriage must not be condemned as though God established something inherently sinful. **When religious tradition becomes more severe than Scripture, it has not become more holy. It has simply begun correcting the God who wrote the Book.**

The final clause of Hebrews 13:4 establishes the necessary boundary: **"but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge."** The same verse that honours the marriage bed condemns its corruption. God does not confuse lawful marital intimacy with fornication, adultery, or other sexual immorality. Nor does the warning teach that a genuinely saved believer loses eternal life whenever he commits a serious sin. The New Testament clearly establishes salvation by grace through faith and the believer's security in Jesus Christ. Nevertheless, eternal security does not eliminate divine chastening, earthly consequences, or accountability before the Judgment Seat of Christ. Hebrews 12:6 declares, **"For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth."** The warning is serious whether addressed to the lost sinner facing divine

condemnation or the disobedient believer who has dishonoured the Lord. **Grace is not permission to commit adultery, and the marriage certificate is not a license to practice wickedness.**

2. One Flesh: The Physical Union Established Before Sin

Genesis 2:24 establishes the original foundation: **“and they shall be one flesh.”** The statement follows God's creation of Eve from Adam and the presentation of the woman to the man. Adam recognized her as bone of his bones and flesh of his flesh, and Scripture then established the continuing principle governing marriage. The physical relationship is therefore connected with the larger union of husband and wife. It does not exist as an independent amusement detached from covenant responsibility, companionship, and faithfulness. The Lord Jesus Christ confirmed this foundation in Matthew 19:5–6, declaring that the husband and wife become one flesh and are no longer twain. Marriage joins two distinct human beings in a relationship that possesses physical, personal, and covenantal significance. **The world wants the pleasure of the one-flesh relationship without the obligations of the marriage covenant, but God never presented those responsibilities as optional decorations.**

First Corinthians 6:16 demonstrates the moral seriousness of physical union when Paul asks, **“What? know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body? for two, saith he, shall be one flesh.”** The immediate context concerns the believer's obligation to flee fornication and recognize that his body belongs to the Lord. Paul uses the language of Genesis to expose the wickedness of unlawful sexual conduct. The passage does not mean that fornication automatically establishes a lawful marriage. It means physical union possesses significance beyond the temporary pleasure that sinners may attach to it. Verse 18 commands, **“Flee fornication.”** Verse 20 reminds the believer, **“For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.”** The Christian cannot separate bodily conduct from spiritual responsibility. **A man who claims his body is his private property has apparently forgotten that redemption was purchased by somebody else's blood.**

The one-flesh relationship must also be understood without inventing doctrines the Bible does not teach. Marriage does not erase the individual conscience, dignity, judgment, or accountability of either spouse. A husband does not acquire ownership of his wife's soul, and a wife does not possess unrestricted authority over her husband's person. The union establishes genuine obligations within a relationship governed by God's Word. Ephesians 5:28 declares, **“So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself.”** The Apostle connects marital love with the reality of the one-flesh union. A husband who deliberately mistreats his wife acts contrary to the very relationship

he claims to honour. The same principle should encourage mutual tenderness and consideration. **Becoming one flesh does not make selfishness holy. It makes selfishness particularly destructive because the person being injured is the very companion God has joined to the offender.**

3. Due Benevolence: The Mutual Responsibilities of Husband and Wife

First Corinthians 7:2 establishes the immediate setting for Paul's instructions: **"Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband."** The Apostle is addressing questions concerning marriage, celibacy, and sexual conduct within the Corinthian assembly. He recognizes marriage as the proper relationship for sexual intimacy while also explaining that unmarried life can be appropriate for those possessing the necessary gift. Verse 3 then declares, **"Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence: and likewise also the wife unto the husband."** Notice the reciprocal language. The husband receives an obligation toward his wife, and the wife receives an obligation toward her husband. Paul does not portray physical affection as a privilege belonging exclusively to one spouse while the other exists merely to satisfy personal demands. **The marriage bed was not established as a royal throne where one selfish individual issues orders and expects the other to provide entertainment.**

First Corinthians 7:4 continues, **"The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife."** The second half of the verse is just as inspired as the first. Certain men can quote the opening clause with astonishing confidence while demonstrating remarkable difficulty remembering the reciprocal obligation. Paul states both. The passage teaches mutual marital responsibility, not unilateral ownership or permission for coercion. No honest reading of Scripture can transform the command to render benevolence into authorization for violence, threats, humiliation, or sexual force. Benevolence concerns kindness and goodwill, not domination. The husband remains commanded to love his wife as Christ loved the Church, while the wife remains entitled to the honour commanded in First Peter 3:7. **A fellow who quotes only the half of First Corinthians 7:4 that appears to benefit him has not discovered biblical authority. He has discovered how to stop reading at a convenient location.**

Verse 5 adds, **"Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency."** The expression **"with consent"** is significant. Paul recognizes mutual agreement concerning temporary abstinence, while warning against the dangers of deliberate and unnecessary deprivation within marriage. Yet this instruction

must be considered alongside illness, physical limitations, exhaustion, childbirth, emotional distress, and circumstances requiring genuine consideration. The passage does not require one spouse to disregard the other's safety or well-being. Neither should affection be deliberately withheld as an instrument of revenge, manipulation, or bargaining. The Christian obligation is reciprocal care, governed by charity and wisdom. **A husband and wife should never turn the marriage bed into a marketplace where affection is purchased through compliance or denied as punishment for losing an argument.**

4. Charity and Consideration: Affection Without Selfish Demands

The New Testament does not permit marital intimacy to be separated from the character of Christian love. First Corinthians 13:4–5 declares, **"Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil."** The immediate chapter concerns the superiority of charity over spiritual gifts and religious accomplishments, but its principles govern Christian conduct generally. They certainly apply within marriage. Physical affection that seeks only personal satisfaction while disregarding the other spouse's circumstances contradicts the command that charity **"seeketh not her own."** A husband who responds to illness, discomfort, or legitimate reluctance with anger has forgotten the requirement of kindness. A wife who deliberately exploits affection to manipulate her husband has likewise departed from charity. **Biblical love does not arrive carrying a list of demands and then announce that selfishness has become a spiritual gift.**

Ephesians 5:25 directs the husband's attention toward the supreme example: **"Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it."** The Saviour's love was sacrificial rather than selfish. No earthly husband can repeat Christ's redeeming work, but he is commanded to demonstrate the character of self-giving love. Ephesians 5:29 adds that a man nourishes and cherishes his own flesh, **"even as the Lord the church."** Nourishing and cherishing require attention, tenderness, and consideration. These responsibilities are not suspended when the subject becomes physical intimacy. A Christian husband should desire his wife's welfare, not merely her participation. A Christian wife should likewise demonstrate genuine consideration toward her husband rather than treating affection as an inconvenience to be managed through resentment. **The person who claims to love another while consistently disregarding that person's well-being has confused appetite with affection.**

First Peter 3:7 commands husbands to **"dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life."** The instruction requires understanding and honour within marriage. The

husband should recognize that his wife is a human being possessing legitimate needs, limitations, concerns, and responsibilities. The expression **“weaker vessel”** cannot honestly be converted into permission for mistreatment when the same verse commands honour and identifies Christian spouses as fellow heirs. Nor does mutual benevolence require either spouse to surrender the right to refuse unwanted contact. Physical intimacy belongs within the larger relationship of faithful companionship, and it must remain free from force, intimidation, and retaliation. The Christian ought to recognize the difference between affection freely shared and submission demanded through fear. **The marriage bed is honourable because God established it, not because a wedding ring gives one sinner permission to disregard the dignity of another.**

5. Rejoice With the Wife of Thy Youth: Affection and Exclusive Delight

Proverbs 5 supplies some of the strongest biblical instruction concerning marital exclusivity. Verse 15 declares, **“Drink waters out of thine own cistern, and running waters out of thine own well.”** The chapter is addressed through the language of fatherly wisdom, warning against the strange woman and the destructive consequences of sexual immorality. The imagery directs the man toward satisfaction within his own marriage rather than unlawful relationships outside it. Verse 18 declares, **“Let thy fountain be blessed: and rejoice with the wife of thy youth.”** Notice that God does not merely command avoidance of adultery. The passage encourages faithful delight in one's own wife. There is an important difference between merely refusing unlawful conduct and actively cultivating lawful affection. **The man who spends his life admiring every strange woman while neglecting his own wife has failed to understand the wisdom of Proverbs before he ever commits the outward act of adultery.**

Proverbs 5:19 concludes with the instruction, **“and be thou ravished always with her love.”** The language is affectionate, exclusive, and unmistakably directed toward the man's lawful wife. The passage does not portray physical attraction within marriage as something shameful. It commands the husband to direct his affections properly. That principle exposes the absurdity of a society that celebrates lust toward strangers while treating lasting affection between husband and wife as uninteresting. Marriage is not supposed to become a relationship in which every expression of tenderness disappears once the wedding ceremony has ended. Affection requires attention through the ordinary changes of life, including aging, work, sickness, and family responsibilities. The outward appearance of a spouse will change, but faithfulness must not depend entirely upon the preservation of youthful attractiveness. **A man who promised lifelong devotion and then measures his wife's worth according to the latest advertisement has confused the covenant of marriage with the display window of a department store.**

Song of Solomon 2:16 declares, **“My beloved is mine, and I am his: he feedeth among the lilies.”** The book employs poetic language concerning love, longing, affection, and the relationship between the beloved and the one who loves. Its imagery must be interpreted according to its literary character rather than transformed into literal instructions concerning every expression. Neither should it be treated as though its primary purpose were to establish New Testament doctrine concerning Christ and His Church. The book celebrates the personal and exclusive character of affection. Within lawful marriage, such affection belongs to the companionship God established. A husband and wife should be able to demonstrate tenderness, appreciation, and delight without imitating the corruption promoted by the world. The romantic language of Scripture does not require vulgarity to communicate affection. **God provided an entire biblical book containing expressions of love, yet fallen humanity still imagines that affection cannot be meaningful unless it borrows its vocabulary from a sewer.**

6. Flee Fornication: Guarding the Marriage Against Adultery and Lust

First Thessalonians 4:3 establishes the will of God with unmistakable clarity: **“For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication.”** Paul was addressing believers concerning holy living in contrast with the sexual practices characteristic of those who did not know God. Verse 4 continues, **“That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour.”** Verse 5 adds, **“Not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles which know not God.”** The distinction concerns holiness rather than merely outward reputation. The Christian is not free to adopt the world's standards simply because wickedness has become fashionable. Salvation by grace does not transform fornication into acceptable conduct. Titus 2:11–12 explains that the grace of God teaches believers to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts. **The grace that saves a sinner does not then issue him a membership card authorizing every appetite his flesh can imagine.**

The Lord Jesus Christ exposed the inward corruption behind adultery in Matthew 5:28: **“But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.”** The statement occurs within the Sermon on the Mount, where Christ addresses righteousness and the moral seriousness of sin. The distinction between inward lust and outward adultery must not be erased; the consequences are not identical. Nevertheless, both demonstrate the necessity of guarding the heart. Job 31:1 records, **“I made a covenant with mine eyes; why then should I think upon a maid?”** The principle is particularly relevant to pornography, deliberate sexual fantasizing, flirtation, and the continual pursuit of images intended to excite unlawful desire. A married person cannot reasonably claim to honour the marriage covenant while

deliberately cultivating lust toward others. **A wedding ring on the finger does not sanctify wickedness entertained through the eyes.**

The danger also extends to relationships that begin under respectable appearances but gradually undermine marital faithfulness. Secret communication, deliberate flirtation, emotional attachment cultivated in deception, and conversations concealed because their content would betray the spouse's trust all deserve serious examination. Proverbs 6:27 asks, **"Can a man take fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burned?"** The warning concerns the consequences of adultery, and its illustration is painfully appropriate. A person who continually approaches temptation while boasting about personal self-control is acting like a man testing how closely he can hold a torch to dry timber. First Corinthians 10:12 warns, **"Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."** Faithfulness requires more than confidence in one's own character. It requires practical obedience and the refusal to cultivate opportunities for sin. **The safest way to avoid falling into a ditch is not to walk along its edge congratulating yourself upon your balance.**

7. Glorify God in Your Body: Purity, Repentance, and Christian Accountability

First Corinthians 6:19–20 declares, **"What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."** Paul addresses believers whose bodily conduct must reflect their belonging to Christ. The immediate discussion concerns fornication, making the application particularly direct. A Christian cannot treat sexual conduct as a private department of life in which the authority of God has been suspended. The body belongs to the Lord. The believer has been redeemed through the blood of Jesus Christ and is responsible to walk accordingly. This does not mean that physical intimacy within marriage is inherently unspiritual. Hebrews 13:4 has already established the opposite. It means that the lawful marriage relationship must be conducted consistently with holiness. **The Lord who purchased the believer at Calvary did not surrender His authority when that believer entered the bedroom.**

The distinction between salvation and Christian conduct must remain clear. Ephesians 2:8–9 declares, **"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast."** Eternal life is received through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, not earned through sexual purity, successful marriage, or personal morality. Ephesians 1:13 identifies the believer as sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise after believing the Gospel. Yet this security provides no excuse for disobedience. Romans 6:1–2 asks, **"Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid."** The Christian who excuses adultery by appealing to eternal security has failed to understand the grace he claims to defend. Divine chastening and the consequences of sin remain

serious matters. **Salvation is not purchased by good behaviour, but neither was it purchased so that redeemed sinners could advertise their freedom to behave wickedly.**

Where marital unfaithfulness has occurred, the biblical response must involve truth, repentance, accountability, and the rejection of further deception. Proverbs 28:13 declares, **"He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy."** The passage belongs to Old Testament wisdom literature, but its principle concerning confession and forsaking sin agrees with the New Testament's requirement of genuine repentance. A person cannot restore confidence merely by demanding immediate forgiveness while continuing the conduct that destroyed it. Neither should forgiveness be confused with the automatic restoration of trust or the obligation to remain exposed to danger. Serious wrongdoing may require protection, lawful intervention, and sustained evidence of changed conduct. The guilty party must not employ Scripture to silence the injured spouse. **Repentance is not a speech delivered to escape consequences. It is a turning from the wickedness that produced them.** The Christian marriage should be governed by truth rather than the preservation of a respectable appearance.

Conclusion

The biblical teaching concerning marital intimacy is neither confused nor contradictory. Hebrews 13:4 declares marriage honourable and the marriage bed undefiled while warning that God will judge sexual immorality. Genesis establishes the original one-flesh union before the entrance of sin. First Corinthians 7 explains the mutual responsibilities of husband and wife and warns against deliberate deprivation within the marriage relationship. Proverbs 5 directs affection toward the lawful spouse and condemns the pursuit of unlawful pleasure. The Song of Solomon demonstrates that affectionate language and exclusive delight are not foreign to Scripture. First Thessalonians commands sanctification, while First Corinthians 6 reminds believers that their bodies belong to the Lord. These passages occupy different historical and doctrinal settings, but their teaching is consistent. **God established physical intimacy within marriage, condemned its unlawful imitation outside marriage, and commanded the redeemed to conduct themselves in holiness. The world may prefer to confuse those distinctions, but the Bible has never required assistance from human opinion to make them plain.**

Every Christian husband and wife should therefore examine the conduct and attitudes that govern their physical relationship. Is affection accompanied by kindness and genuine consideration, or has selfishness replaced charity? Is faithfulness maintained in private as well as public, or are secret habits undermining the covenant? Does each spouse

recognize the other's legitimate needs, circumstances, and dignity? Have pornography, unlawful fantasies, flirtation, or concealed relationships begun occupying attention that belongs within the marriage? Are difficult matters addressed through honesty and patience, or has physical affection become an instrument of manipulation, punishment, or pressure? These questions concern obedience to Scripture, not the preservation of sentimental appearances. A marriage may possess beautiful photographs and an impressive public reputation while serious disobedience remains hidden within the household. **God is not impressed by wedding vows that are celebrated publicly and contradicted privately. The marriage covenant deserves faithfulness when nobody is watching, because Almighty God is never absent from the room.**

The final standard must always be the Word of God. Marriage is honourable because the Creator established it, and the marriage bed is undefiled because physical intimacy belongs within that lawful union. But the honour of marriage does not excuse selfishness, cruelty, deception, coercion, or unfaithfulness. A husband must love his wife as Christ loved the Church, and a wife must fulfil her responsibilities with godly wisdom and consideration. Both must reject the lusts of the flesh, preserve the exclusivity of their relationship, and remember that Christian liberty is never permission to sin. The world has produced an endless procession of new theories concerning physical pleasure, yet its inventions have not improved upon the simple instructions God placed in His Book. **The marriage bed does not need the world's corruption to become meaningful, and it does not need religious shame to become holy. It needs faithfulness, charity, honour, and obedience to the God who established it. When husband and wife understand that truth, physical intimacy is no longer treated as a selfish demand or a passing amusement, but as part of the sacred companionship and covenant responsibility belonging to marriage by the Book.**

9 of 10 – Marriage by the Book – Money, Work, and the Household: Stewardship Without Strife

Key Passage: 1 Timothy 5:8 (KJV)

“But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.” — 1 Timothy 5:8

Introduction

There is something almost comical about a married couple who can agree upon the inspiration of the Scriptures, the deity of Jesus Christ, the eternal security of the believer, and the coming of the Lord, yet cannot agree upon whether they can afford another automobile. They may possess enough doctrinal knowledge to conduct a respectable Bible conference, but mention the household finances and suddenly the conversation resembles a meeting between two hostile governments negotiating a ceasefire. One wants to purchase, the other wants to save. One believes the household possesses plenty of money, while the other knows the electricity bill is overdue. One considers debt an emergency, while the other regards available credit as evidence that the Lord has opened another door. Meanwhile, the financial obligations continue arriving with remarkable faithfulness. The King James Bible has considerably more to say about money, labor, stewardship, contentment, and personal responsibility than many Christians have ever bothered to examine. **A household can survive without expensive possessions, but it will suffer when financial foolishness becomes a permanent member of the family.**

The problem is not money itself. Money is a necessary instrument through which human beings conduct business, purchase necessities, support their families, assist those in need, and contribute to the work of the Lord. The problem arises when money becomes a master instead of a servant. First Timothy 6:10 declares, **"For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows."** Notice the precise wording. The Bible does not say that money is the root of all evil. It identifies the love of money. A wealthy man can be covetous, and a poor man can be equally enslaved by the same desire. A Christian may possess little money and spend every waking hour dreaming about riches, while another may possess considerable resources and employ them faithfully in the service of God. **Covetousness does not examine the balance in a bank account before entering the heart.** It is perfectly capable of taking up residence in a mansion or a rented apartment.

Marriage introduces particular financial responsibilities because two individuals have entered a household relationship in which their decisions affect one another. The husband cannot treat his earnings as an independent kingdom while expecting his wife to endure the consequences of his extravagance. The wife cannot accumulate secret obligations and then announce that her purchases were merely expressions of personal independence. Both must recognize the responsibilities established by Scripture. First Timothy 5:8 addresses the duty of providing for one's family. Proverbs commends diligence and prudent planning. Luke 16:10–13 establishes the seriousness of faithfulness in financial matters. Hebrews 13:5 commands contentment, while Philippians 4 reveals the Apostle Paul's ability to endure both abundance and need through Christ. These passages occupy

different historical and doctrinal settings, but their practical instruction is unmistakable. **Financial stewardship is not measured merely by how much a household possesses. It is measured by how faithfully its occupants handle what God has permitted them to possess.**

1. Providing for His Own: The Responsibility God Will Not Excuse

First Timothy 5:8 contains one of the strongest statements concerning family responsibility in the New Testament: **"But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel."** The immediate context concerns the care of widows and the responsibility of family members to support relatives who possess legitimate needs. Paul is instructing Timothy concerning proper conduct within the Church, including the distinction between those whose families should provide for them and those requiring assistance from the assembly. The verse is therefore not an isolated announcement that every Christian husband must become wealthy. It establishes the seriousness of providing for those entrusted to one's care. The word **"any"** prevents us from pretending that family responsibility concerns husbands exclusively, although the husband's particular obligations remain substantial. **A Christian who possesses the ability to provide for his household but deliberately refuses to do so has not demonstrated superior spirituality. He has contradicted the faith he professes.**

Second Thessalonians 3:10 supplies another principle: **"For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat."** Notice the distinction between **"would not"** and *could not*. Paul is condemning deliberate unwillingness to work, not illness, disability, unavoidable unemployment, or circumstances in which honest labor has failed to produce sufficient income. Verse 12 commands the disorderly to work with quietness and eat their own bread. The Christian is not instructed to despise the person who genuinely requires assistance. He is instructed to reject voluntary idleness and irresponsible dependence upon others. A husband who is physically capable of honest work should not spend his days manufacturing excuses while his family struggles to obtain necessities. Likewise, a wife who contributes through paid employment, household labor, childcare, or other necessary responsibilities is performing work that deserves recognition. **God never defined faithfulness by the size of a paycheck, but He certainly did not commend laziness dressed in religious language.**

Provision must also be understood beyond merely depositing money into an account. A husband may earn an impressive income while neglecting every responsibility that requires his presence, judgment, or personal attention. Ephesians 5:25 commands husbands to love their wives as Christ loved the Church, while verse 29 speaks of nourishing and cherishing. Financial provision belongs within that broader responsibility. A father who

supplies expensive possessions but never spends meaningful time with his children should not imagine that his financial accomplishments have fulfilled every biblical obligation. Neither should a man condemn himself because his family cannot afford the luxuries enjoyed by others. First Timothy 6:8 declares, **"And having food and raiment let us be therewith content."** Honest labor, reasonable provision, and faithful conduct matter more than outward prosperity. **A man who neglects his family to purchase a larger house may discover that he has acquired more rooms in which his wife and children can experience his absence.**

2. The Thoughts of the Diligent: Planning Before the Bills Arrive

Proverbs 21:5 declares, **"The thoughts of the diligent tend only to plenteousness; but of every one that is hasty only to want."** The contrast is between thoughtful diligence and reckless haste. Solomon is giving wisdom concerning ordinary life, not promising that every Christian who prepares a household budget will automatically become prosperous. The verse belongs to Old Testament wisdom literature and must not be turned into a guaranteed formula for material wealth. Nevertheless, its practical instruction is excellent. Financial decisions should be considered before they are made. A household ought to know what income is available, which obligations require payment, and what resources remain for other purposes. Some people make financial decisions with the seriousness of a child selecting sweets, then appear genuinely astonished when the bills arrive. **The electricity company has never accepted enthusiasm as payment, and the mortgage lender is unlikely to be impressed by a testimony concerning how beautiful the new furniture looks.**

The Lord Jesus Christ employed the illustration of counting the cost in Luke 14:28: **"For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it?"** The immediate passage concerns the seriousness of discipleship and the necessity of considering its cost. It is not a specialized financial instruction concerning household budgets. Nevertheless, Christ's illustration assumes the obvious wisdom of calculating expenses before beginning a substantial undertaking. The principle has direct practical application. A married couple considering a house, automobile, business venture, or expensive commitment should examine the likely cost rather than relying upon excitement to supply missing funds. Proverbs 27:23 commands, **"Be thou diligent to know the state of thy flocks, and look well to thy herds."** In its agricultural setting, that meant understanding the condition of one's resources. **A family that refuses to examine its finances is like a farmer who never counts his livestock but confidently announces that the barn must be full.**

Scripture also commends preparation for future needs. Proverbs 6:6–8 directs the sluggard to consider the ant, which **“Provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest.”** The passage praises diligence and preparation, not fearful hoarding or faith in accumulated possessions. A household should reasonably anticipate recurring expenses, repairs, emergencies, and periods when income may be reduced. Setting aside resources when possible is ordinarily wiser than spending every available dollar simply because it has arrived. Yet saving must never become an idol that destroys generosity or produces continual anxiety. Proverbs 11:24 describes the distinction between appropriate generosity and withholding more than is meet. Wisdom requires balance. A Christian should neither squander tomorrow's necessities upon today's appetites nor worship tomorrow's security as though accumulated money could replace Almighty God. **Saving is wise when it prepares a household for responsibility; it becomes foolish when the savings account begins occupying the place of the Lord.**

3. The Borrower Is Servant to the Lender: Debt and Its Consequences

Proverbs 22:7 delivers a warning that deserves to be printed upon every credit application: **“The rich ruleth over the poor, and the borrower is servant to the lender.”** Solomon is describing a practical relationship of financial dependence. Borrowing creates obligations, and those obligations surrender a measure of future financial freedom to the lender. The verse does not declare that every loan is automatically sinful, nor does it forbid every legitimate financial arrangement involving credit. Scripture contains provisions governing lending and borrowing in various historical settings. The warning concerns the consequences of indebtedness. A family that borrows extensively to satisfy present desires commits future income before it has even been earned. **Debt has a remarkable ability to make yesterday's purchases appear on tomorrow's list of responsibilities, usually accompanied by interest for the privilege of remembering them.** The borrower may enjoy the acquisition immediately, but the lender expects payment long afterward.

The danger becomes especially serious when borrowing is used to create an appearance of prosperity that the household cannot actually support. A couple may possess an impressive vehicle, expensive furnishings, fashionable clothing, and the latest electronic conveniences while struggling to meet basic obligations. Their neighbours see the possessions; the creditors see the payments. Proverbs 13:7 declares, **“There is that maketh himself rich, yet hath nothing: there is that maketh himself poor, yet hath great riches.”** The passage exposes the difference between outward appearance and actual substance. Modern advertising encourages consumers to purchase what they cannot afford in order to impress people whose opinions possess little lasting value. The result is financial bondage presented in attractive packaging. **A borrowed luxury remains**

borrowed, no matter how beautifully it photographs. The Christian household should be governed by honest judgment rather than the desperate desire to appear successful before strangers.

Debt also becomes a moral issue when obligations are concealed or repayment is deliberately neglected. Psalm 37:21 declares, **"The wicked borroweth, and payeth not again: but the righteous sheweth mercy, and giveth."** The Psalm belongs to David's instruction concerning the wicked and the righteous, and its principle condemns dishonest refusal to honour legitimate obligations. Romans 13:8 states, **"Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law."** Within Paul's broader discussion of obligations, the believer is instructed to deal honourably with what is owed. Christians should not use financial difficulty as an excuse for deception, nor should they promise repayment without genuine intention to fulfill the agreement. Where hardship makes payment difficult, honesty and responsible communication are required. A husband or wife who secretly incurs debt is also imposing consequences upon the other spouse without truthful agreement. **Financial integrity begins when a Christian recognizes that borrowed money is not free money and that a promise to repay is not merely a decorative sentence on a contract.**

4. Husband and Wife as Stewards: Honesty Instead of Financial Warfare

The responsibilities of financial stewardship belong to the household, not merely to the individual who receives the largest paycheck. Ephesians 5:28 commands husbands to love their wives as their own bodies, establishing the seriousness of the one-flesh relationship. Proverbs 31 provides an extraordinary description of a capable wife whose judgment contributes directly to the household's welfare. Verse 16 declares, **"She considereth a field, and buyeth it: with the fruit of her hands she planteth a vineyard."** The woman evaluates property, conducts business, and employs resources productively. Verse 11 states, **"The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil."** The picture is one of confidence rather than suspicion. **A husband who believes biblical headship requires him to disregard his wife's financial judgment has apparently overlooked the woman whom the Holy Ghost spent an entire chapter praising for hers.**

Financial honesty is essential because marriage joins two people whose decisions frequently produce shared consequences. Ephesians 4:25 commands believers to put away lying and speak truth with their neighbours. Surely the Christian who must speak truthfully to his neighbour has no exemption allowing deception toward his spouse. Secret bank accounts employed to conceal irresponsible conduct, undisclosed debts, dishonest explanations concerning purchases, and financial arrangements designed to manipulate

another person contradict the principles of Christian integrity. This does not mean every household must employ identical banking arrangements or that neither spouse may possess reasonable personal discretion. Couples can manage resources through different practical systems. The issue is whether their arrangements demonstrate honesty, fairness, responsibility, and mutual confidence. **A marriage does not require two people to examine every grocery receipt like suspicious government auditors, but neither can trust flourish where financial deception has become an established household custom.**

The husband's responsibility for leadership must never be turned into permission for financial intimidation or control. First Peter 3:7 commands husbands to dwell with their wives according to knowledge and give them honour. A man who deliberately deprives his wife of reasonable access to necessities, conceals household resources to maintain power, or employs money to threaten and punish her has departed from biblical love. Likewise, a wife who secretly wastes essential resources while expecting her husband to repair every consequence has failed in stewardship. Philippians 2:4 declares, **"Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others."** The immediate context concerns Christian humility, but its application to financial cooperation is unmistakable. Major obligations should be approached with truthful discussion, consideration, and appropriate agreement. **The marriage covenant is not a financial battlefield in which the person controlling the money possesses unlimited authority to punish the other. It is a relationship in which both must answer to God for their conduct.**

5. The Love of Money: When Covetousness Becomes the Household Religion

First Timothy 6:6 establishes a principle that modern materialism despises: **"But godliness with contentment is great gain."** Paul is warning Timothy concerning false teaching, corrupt motives, and people who suppose that gain is godliness. Verse 9 declares, **"But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition."** Notice the danger attached to the determination to become rich. The passage does not condemn honest labor, reasonable prosperity, or faithful stewardship of substantial resources. It exposes the spiritual danger of making riches the governing ambition of life. A man can become so determined to accumulate wealth that his conscience, family, and service to God are gradually sacrificed upon the altar of financial success. **Money becomes dangerous when it stops being something a person possesses and becomes something that possesses the person.**

The warning reaches its strongest expression in verse 10: **“For the love of money is the root of all evil.”** The exact wording must be preserved. It is the love of money, not the mere possession of currency, that Paul identifies. Covetousness can flourish in poverty or abundance because it concerns the desires of the heart. Colossians 3:5 identifies covetousness as idolatry, placing it among sins that believers must mortify. That is a severe description. The covetous person may never bow before a carved statue, yet his conduct reveals that possessions have become an object of devotion. His decisions are governed by acquisition, his happiness by comparison, and his confidence by the condition of his accounts. **A man does not need a golden calf in the living room to practice idolatry. Sometimes all he needs is an account balance he trusts more than Almighty God.**

Hebrews 13:5 commands, **“Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.”** The passage connects contentment with the faithfulness of God. Contentment does not mean refusing honest employment, abandoning financial improvement, or remaining indifferent toward legitimate household needs. It means rejecting the restless appetite that insists life cannot be satisfactory until another possession has been acquired. The world continually manufactures dissatisfaction because dissatisfaction produces customers. A person who was perfectly content with his automobile yesterday is informed today that its design is obsolete. A comfortable house becomes inadequate because somebody elsewhere has purchased a larger one. **Advertising can convince a man that his perfectly functional furniture has become a personal tragedy. Scripture commands him to recognize the difference between genuine need and manufactured discontent.** The Christian household should not be governed by the endless commercial demand for more.

6. Faithful in That Which Is Least: Giving, Generosity, and Accountability

Luke 16:10 declares, **“He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much.”** The statement appears within the Lord's teaching following the parable of the unjust steward. The historical setting concerns Christ's earthly ministry, and the passage must not be turned into a guarantee that faithful Christians will receive unlimited financial wealth. Its principle concerns trustworthy conduct in matters that may appear relatively insignificant. Verse 11 asks, **“If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?”** Money becomes a test of stewardship rather than a measure of spiritual worth. A person who continually mishandles small responsibilities should not automatically assume that receiving a larger income will correct the problem. **Giving a**

reckless spender more money without correcting his recklessness is like providing a larger bucket to somebody who refuses to repair the hole in the bottom.

The Lord concludes in Luke 16:13, **"Ye cannot serve God and mammon."** The question concerns mastery. The Christian may employ money, save money, earn money, and give money without worshipping it. But when wealth becomes the controlling authority of life, obedience to God is displaced. Giving is one practical area in which this conflict becomes apparent. Second Corinthians 9:7 declares, **"Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver."** Paul is discussing the collection for needy saints, and the passage provides important instruction concerning voluntary Christian generosity. It must not be confused with Israel's national tithing regulations under the Mosaic law or converted into a scheme promising guaranteed financial multiplication. Christian giving should be sincere, purposeful, and cheerful. **The Lord does not need a religious salesman promising that every dollar placed in an offering will return wearing ten companions.**

Generosity must also be practiced with wisdom. Second Corinthians 8:12 declares, **"For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not."** Paul recognizes the resources actually available to the giver. A Christian should not neglect essential family obligations merely to create an impressive public reputation for generosity. First Timothy 5:8 has already established the seriousness of providing for one's own household. Yet the opposite error must also be rejected. A family can become so consumed with saving, purchasing, and protecting its possessions that the needs of others are permanently ignored. First John 3:17 asks how the love of God dwells in a person who possesses this world's good, sees his brother in need, and shuts up his compassion. **Faithful stewardship neither gives recklessly to purchase admiration nor withholds selfishly to preserve every personal luxury. It recognizes that the money entrusted to a Christian should be handled beneath the authority of the God who owns everything.**

7. I Have Learned to Be Content: Christ Above Financial Circumstances

Philippians 4:11 contains one of the most remarkable statements concerning contentment in the New Testament: **"Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content."** The Apostle Paul was addressing the Philippians concerning their fellowship and financial support. He was not delivering a commercial presentation explaining how Christians could obtain the lifestyles of the wealthy. He had experienced both want and abundance, yet learned contentment through the sufficiency of Christ. Verse 12 declares, **"I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound."** Paul could endure material deficiency without surrendering his faith, and

he could receive provision without becoming enslaved to possessions. That is a spiritual lesson many married couples desperately need. **A household that can remain faithful only when the bank account is comfortable has built its peace upon a foundation that changes every payday.**

Philippians 4:13 follows directly: **"I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."** The verse is frequently removed from its setting and turned into a slogan promising success in virtually any undertaking a person wishes to pursue. But Paul's immediate subject concerns strength to endure changing material circumstances faithfully. He is not claiming that Christ guarantees every business venture will succeed or that a Christian will never encounter financial hardship. He is testifying to the sufficiency of the Lord amid both abundance and need. That truth carries tremendous value into marriage. A husband and wife may experience unemployment, unexpected expenses, reduced income, illness, or other difficulties beyond their control. Such circumstances require wisdom, honest effort, and appropriate assistance where needed. They need not become excuses for bitterness or accusations. **Christ did not promise every Christian a wealthy household. He promised His people something infinitely greater than a prosperous balance sheet: His own faithfulness.**

The danger of sacrificing spiritual responsibilities for material advancement is addressed in Proverbs 23:4–5: **"Labour not to be rich: cease from thine own wisdom. Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not? for riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away as an eagle toward heaven."** The passage warns against exhausting life in the pursuit of uncertain wealth. Financial ambition may consume years that cannot be recovered. A husband may convince himself that he is working endlessly for his family while gradually eliminating every opportunity to be present with them. A wife may become equally absorbed in possessions, status, or career recognition until the home receives only whatever remains after those ambitions have been satisfied. Honest work is honourable, but money is a poor substitute for faithfulness. **There is little wisdom in spending twenty years acquiring possessions for a household whose relationships have been neglected for those same twenty years.** The Christian must distinguish provision from obsession and diligence from the worship of success.

Conclusion

The Bible's instruction concerning money and household stewardship is remarkably consistent. First Timothy establishes the seriousness of providing for one's family. Proverbs commends diligence, preparation, honesty, and caution concerning debt. Luke 16 exposes the spiritual significance of faithfulness in material matters and warns against serving mammon. Hebrews commands contentment rather than covetousness, while Philippians

demonstrates that the believer's strength rests upon Jesus Christ rather than changing financial circumstances. These passages do not promise that every faithful Christian will become wealthy, nor do they teach that poverty necessarily results from personal disobedience. The Scriptures recognize honest work, wise stewardship, legitimate hardship, generosity, and the danger of materialism. **God has never declared that the richest household is necessarily the most righteous one. A man may possess a fortune and remain spiritually bankrupt, while another may possess little and walk faithfully before the LORD.** Financial success and spiritual faithfulness are not interchangeable terms.

Every husband and wife should therefore examine the financial conduct governing their household. Are obligations handled honestly, or does one spouse conceal information that the other has a legitimate responsibility to know? Are purchases considered carefully, or does excitement regularly overrule judgment? Is borrowing employed prudently, or has debt become the permanent substitute for self-control? Does the household make reasonable preparation for future needs, or is every available dollar consumed without consideration? Are giving and generosity practiced according to Scripture, or have possessions become too precious to share? Most importantly, are financial decisions strengthening the marriage or continually introducing unnecessary strife? These questions cannot be settled merely by increasing income. A larger salary may provide additional opportunities, but it cannot manufacture honesty, patience, generosity, or godliness. **The couple who cannot govern a modest income through biblical wisdom may discover that a larger income simply gives their foolishness more expensive opportunities.** Stewardship begins with obedience, not abundance.

The Christian home must finally recognize that money is an instrument, not a saviour. It can purchase food, provide shelter, pay legitimate obligations, assist the needy, and support the work of the Lord. It cannot forgive sin, purchase eternal life, restore wasted years, or replace the affection and faithfulness belonging to marriage. Ephesians 2:8–9 establishes that salvation is by grace through faith, not of works, and certainly not through financial prosperity. The redeemed Christian is therefore called to handle earthly possessions without confusing them with eternal riches. Matthew 6:21 declares, **“For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”** That principle demands examination from every household claiming to honour God. A husband and wife should work honestly, plan wisely, borrow cautiously, give cheerfully, communicate truthfully, and remain content with God's provision while fulfilling their responsibilities. **A beautiful house cannot substitute for a peaceful home, a large income cannot purchase a faithful marriage, and a full bank account cannot make up for an empty spiritual life. The Christian household does not need to worship money, fear money, or continually quarrel over money. It**

needs to put money in its proper place beneath the authority of Almighty God. When Christ is honoured, stewardship becomes a responsibility rather than an idol, and the home can possess something no amount of wealth can guarantee: the peace of a conscience governed by the Word of God.

10 of 10 – Marriage by the Book – Keeping the Home Together: Forgiveness, Endurance, and a Testimony That Lasts

Key Passage: Ephesians 4:31–32 (KJV)

“Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.” — Ephesians 4:31–32

Introduction

There is a remarkable difference between getting married and remaining faithfully married through the changing circumstances of life. The first may require a marriage license, a preacher, two witnesses, a suitable location, and enough money to satisfy the people selling flowers and wedding cakes. The second requires something that cannot be purchased from a wedding planner: obedience to Almighty God when human feelings, personal convenience, and ordinary circumstances are pulling in another direction. Modern society has become extraordinarily skilled at arranging impressive weddings while demonstrating considerably less skill at building enduring marriages. Thousands of dollars may be spent upon decorations that will be discarded within twenty-four hours, while almost no attention is given to the biblical responsibilities that remain after the guests have departed. The bride and groom exchange promises concerning sickness and health, prosperity and adversity, and lifelong faithfulness. Then real life arrives, and the promises are tested by circumstances that never appeared in the wedding photographs. **A beautiful wedding can be purchased with money, but a faithful marriage requires something that money cannot supply: two people willing to obey God after the celebration has ended.**

The Christian marriage is not proven by the absence of difficulty. Adam and Eve began their relationship in a perfect environment, and their descendants have been demonstrating the consequences of sin ever since. Two saved people entering marriage do not suddenly become sinless because somebody has pronounced them husband and wife. Both possess the capacity for pride, selfishness, impatience, dishonesty, bitterness, and foolish

judgment. Both can speak when they ought to remain silent and remain silent when they ought to acknowledge wrongdoing. Both can become so occupied with examining the other's failures that they overlook their own disobedience. The Apostle Paul understood the necessity of dealing with these matters when he commanded believers to put away bitterness, wrath, anger, clamour, evil speaking, and malice. He then instructed them to demonstrate kindness, tenderness, and forgiveness. Those commandments were not originally written as a specialized marriage manual, but they apply with tremendous force to the relationship between husband and wife. **The trouble in many Christian homes is not that the occupants lack enough Bible verses. It is that they have memorized the verses without allowing those verses to govern their conduct.**

This concluding study brings together the responsibilities examined throughout Marriage by the Book. We have considered the divine institution of marriage, the one-flesh union, companionship, headship, submission, sacrificial love, godly communication, physical faithfulness, and financial stewardship. Yet all those truths must now face the test of endurance. What happens when sickness interrupts the household, financial burdens increase, children require unusual attention, personalities clash, or disappointment replaces youthful excitement? What happens when a husband must acknowledge that he has sinned against his wife, or a wife must confess that her own conduct has contributed to unnecessary strife? What happens when the promises once spoken with enthusiasm must be practiced through sacrifice? Scripture does not leave the Christian without instruction. Ephesians 4 explains forgiveness, Colossians 3 establishes charity, Ecclesiastes 4 demonstrates the value of companionship, and Psalm 127 reminds us that human labour cannot replace dependence upon the LORD. **The Christian home is not strengthened by two sinners pretending they have no faults. It is strengthened when those sinners stop defending their disobedience and begin submitting themselves to the Word of God.**

1. Put Away Bitterness: The Sins That Quietly Destroy a Home

Ephesians 4:31 begins with an unmistakable command: **“Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice.”** Notice the word **“all.”** Paul does not provide a special allowance for bitterness that has been carefully preserved because the offended person possesses an impressive collection of reasons for remaining angry. The command concerns the believer's conduct as a member of the body of Christ. Ephesians 4:30 has just warned against grieving the Holy Spirit of God, whereby believers are sealed unto the day of redemption. The passage therefore addresses saved people whose eternal security does not excuse sinful behaviour. Bitterness is particularly dangerous because it may remain concealed beneath an outward appearance of respectability. A husband may continue fulfilling ordinary responsibilities

while secretly rehearsing grievances against his wife. A wife may maintain a pleasant public appearance while allowing resentment to govern every private conversation. **Bitterness is a terrible houseguest: it contributes nothing, complains about everything, and eventually attempts to become the owner.**

The next expressions expose the outward consequences of that inward corruption. Wrath, anger, clamour, and evil speaking frequently travel together. A person nourishes resentment, becomes increasingly irritated, raises his voice, and finally begins using words designed to injure rather than correct. James 1:20 declares, **"For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God."** Proverbs 15:1 adds, **"A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger."** These passages condemn the notion that an angry person becomes righteous merely because his feelings are intense. A husband does not establish authority by frightening his household, and a wife does not establish wisdom by humiliating her husband before others. Neither can justify cruelty through the failures of the other. The biblical command is to put away sinful conduct, not to polish it until it becomes socially acceptable. **A person who spends years sharpening his tongue against his spouse should not be surprised when ordinary conversation begins to resemble combat.**

The final expression, **"with all malice,"** reaches beneath the outward behaviour to the deliberate desire to do harm. Malice is not merely disappointment or legitimate concern over wrongdoing. It involves an evil disposition toward another person. Within marriage, malice may appear through calculated humiliation, personal revenge, deliberate withholding of ordinary kindness, or the determination to make a spouse suffer for past offenses. Romans 12:19 commands believers not to avenge themselves, leaving vengeance to God. The immediate passage concerns Christian conduct generally, but the principle does not cease at the entrance to the home. A husband and wife must reject the temptation to punish one another through continual hostility. This does not eliminate necessary accountability or protection from danger. It forbids personal vengeance as the governing principle of the relationship. **The home is supposed to provide companionship, not serve as a private courthouse where two people continually prosecute one another for crimes they have already decided never to forgive.**

2. Forgiving One Another: The Grace That Must Reach the Dinner Table

Ephesians 4:32 supplies the positive command that follows the removal of bitterness: **"And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."** The foundation is the forgiveness believers have received through Jesus Christ. Paul does not instruct Christians to forgive because sin is insignificant or because wrongdoing never produces consequences. He directs attention

toward God's grace in Christ. Ephesians 1:7 declares, **"In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace."** That forgiveness rests upon the finished work of the Saviour, not upon the sinner's personal merit. The passage does not teach that an earthly spouse possesses divine authority to forgive sin in God's place. It teaches that those who have received mercy should demonstrate a forgiving disposition toward others. **A Christian who rejoices that God has forgiven his sins while insisting that his spouse must spend the next forty years paying for every personal failure has developed a remarkably one-sided appreciation of grace.**

Colossians 3:12–13 expands the instruction: **"Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye."** The command to forbear recognizes that human relationships require patience. A husband and wife will possess different preferences, habits, weaknesses, and limitations. Not every irritation constitutes a moral emergency requiring immediate correction. Some matters demand honest discussion; others require the humility to recognize that one's personal preference is not a commandment from Heaven. Longsuffering is particularly necessary when circumstances become difficult. The man who becomes furious because every arrangement does not follow his preferred schedule has confused personal convenience with biblical authority. The woman who treats every disagreement as proof of deliberate mistreatment may likewise require greater patience. **A marriage cannot endure if every minor inconvenience is promoted to the rank of an unforgivable offense.**

Verse 14 adds, **"And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness."** Charity binds together the virtues Paul has described, giving Christian conduct its proper character. First Corinthians 13:5 declares that charity **"seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil."** Verse 6 adds that charity **"Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth."** This is essential. Biblical forgiveness does not require pretending that serious sin never occurred, rejoicing in continued wickedness, or concealing abuse to preserve appearances. Charity operates according to truth. Where wrongdoing has occurred, repentance, accountability, and changed conduct matter. Yet the offended spouse must also guard against allowing bitterness to become a permanent identity. **Forgiveness is not a command to call evil good, and charity is not a blindfold that prevents Christians from recognizing sin. It is the grace that refuses to become evil while dealing with the evil another person has committed.**

3. Repentance and Restored Trust: More Than Saying the Right Words

Proverbs 28:13 declares, **“He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.”** This Old Testament wisdom statement establishes a principle that agrees with the New Testament's teaching concerning honest confession and repentance. Notice that confession and forsaking belong together. A person who admits wrongdoing merely to end an argument while intending to continue the same conduct has not demonstrated genuine repentance. A husband who repeatedly apologizes for dishonesty while maintaining the deception is attempting to purchase peace with words. A wife who acknowledges deliberate cruelty and then resumes the same behaviour whenever circumstances become inconvenient has likewise failed to forsake the offense. James 5:16 instructs believers to **“Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed.”** The immediate context concerns prayer and the spiritual responsibilities of believers, but the principle of honest acknowledgment is applicable. **An apology without a willingness to change may become nothing more than another method of avoiding responsibility.**

Restoring trust requires more than demanding that the injured person forget what happened. Trust is strengthened through truthfulness, consistency, and faithful conduct over time. Luke 16:10 declares, **“He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much.”** The immediate setting concerns stewardship, but the principle demonstrates the importance of faithfulness in ordinary responsibilities. A husband who has practiced financial deception should not expect confidence to return while continuing to conceal information. A wife who has betrayed her husband's confidence cannot restore it merely by insisting that the subject should never again be discussed. Genuine reconciliation requires appropriate honesty and a willingness to address the consequences of wrongdoing. At the same time, neither spouse should use a genuinely forsaken offense as a permanent weapon for humiliation. **Trust is not restored by one person demanding it, nor is it strengthened by the other refusing every opportunity for demonstrated faithfulness. It grows where truth and responsible conduct are consistently practiced.**

There must also be a clear distinction between biblical forgiveness and the dangerous expectation that someone must continue enduring abuse without seeking protection. Scripture commands husbands to love their wives and forbids bitterness against them. First Peter 3:7 requires husbands to give their wives honour. Those instructions cannot be reconciled with physical violence, threats, coercion, deliberate intimidation, or calculated humiliation. Likewise, a wife remains responsible for her conduct toward her husband. Where serious danger exists, seeking safety, lawful protection, and trustworthy assistance is not rebellion against God. Acts 5:29 establishes the principle that obedience to God takes precedence over human authority. Forgiveness does not eliminate the possibility of consequences, and repentance does not grant the offender authority to dictate the terms

upon which another person must immediately trust him. **The Bible never commands a Christian to protect wickedness from accountability so that a household can continue pretending everything is righteous. A peaceful appearance is not the same thing as a godly home.**

4. Two Are Better Than One: Enduring the Burdens of Ordinary Life

Ecclesiastes 4:9 declares, **"Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour."** The immediate passage concerns the advantages of companionship amid the burdens and uncertainties of life. Solomon is not providing a specialized New Testament marriage ceremony, and the statement should not be confined exclusively to husbands and wives. Nevertheless, its principle applies directly to the companionship established in Genesis. A husband and wife are meant to face life's responsibilities together rather than conduct a permanent contest over whose burdens deserve the most sympathy. Employment, household maintenance, financial obligations, sickness, aging, and the care of children can introduce difficulties neither spouse anticipated when the marriage began. Shared responsibilities do not eliminate hardship, but cooperation changes the manner in which burdens are carried. **Two people pulling the same wagon in opposite directions may demonstrate considerable energy, but they should not expect to accomplish much travelling.**

Ecclesiastes 4:10 continues, **"For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up."** The verse provides a vivid picture of faithful assistance. During some seasons, the husband may possess the strength necessary to carry responsibilities that have become difficult for his wife. During other seasons, the wife may provide support when her husband experiences illness, weakness, discouragement, or unexpected loss. Neither circumstance should become an opportunity for boasting or contempt. A man who refuses assistance because pride prevents him from acknowledging weakness is not demonstrating superior strength. A woman who treats her husband's legitimate difficulty as an opportunity to humiliate him has abandoned the spirit of companionship. Galatians 6:2 instructs believers, **"Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ."** The command concerns Christians generally, but its application within marriage is unmistakable. **When a spouse falls beneath a burden, the other should offer a hand rather than begin preparing a lecture on the advantages of standing upright.**

Verse 12 adds, **"And if one prevail against him, two shall withstand him; and a threefold cord is not quickly broken."** The passage illustrates strength through companionship and united resistance. The familiar comparison of a husband, wife, and God forming a threefold cord may serve as an illustration, but the verse does not explicitly identify its three strands

in that manner. Sound Bible exposition must distinguish what Scripture states from an illustration drawn from it. The practical principle remains valuable. A Christian husband and wife should recognize that life's legitimate burdens are not necessarily evidence that one spouse has become the other's enemy. They can stand together while facing difficulties instead of turning those difficulties into accusations. Philippians 4:13 declares, **"I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."** Paul's immediate context concerns endurance through both need and abundance, not a guarantee of effortless success. **The Christian marriage does not promise a life without storms. It provides a relationship in which two people can seek God's strength while facing the storm together.**

5. Except the LORD Build the House: The Foundation Beneath Every Marriage

Psalm 127:1 declares, **"Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain."** The Psalm is identified as a Song of degrees for Solomon, and its language concerns the necessity of divine blessing upon human labour, security, and family life. It should not be treated as a promise that every Christian household will escape difficulty if its occupants follow a particular religious routine. Solomon's statement exposes the limitation of human effort when separated from dependence upon God. A person may construct a magnificent residence, establish elaborate schedules, accumulate considerable wealth, and maintain a reputation for domestic success while remaining spiritually impoverished. Human effort is necessary, but human effort cannot replace the LORD. **A man may possess enough money to build a palace and still lack enough wisdom to govern his tongue at the dinner table. The price of the house tells us remarkably little about the condition of the home.**

Joshua 24:15 contains another declaration frequently associated with Christian households: **"but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."** The historical setting must be preserved. Joshua was addressing Israel, confronting the nation with its responsibility to serve the true God rather than the idols associated with surrounding peoples and earlier generations. The passage does not establish a new covenant with the New Testament Church, nor does it promise automatic salvation to every member of a Christian household. Nevertheless, Joshua's declaration provides a powerful example of personal commitment to the LORD. A Christian father ought to lead through godly example rather than empty religious demands. A mother ought to demonstrate faithful obedience rather than treating spiritual instruction as an occasional decoration. Children should witness consistency between public profession and private conduct. **The family that**

hangs Joshua 24:15 upon the wall but refuses to practice its principle has acquired an attractive decoration, not a substitute for obedience.

The Christian home should therefore give proper attention to the Word of God, prayer, personal holiness, and fellowship with believers. Colossians 3:16 declares, **"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom."** Second Timothy 2:15 commands the believer to study and rightly divide the word of truth. These responsibilities should not be surrendered merely because employment, entertainment, and ordinary activities continually demand attention. Family Bible reading and prayer may be simple, but they should be sincere. The father who teaches his children Scripture while treating their mother with contempt has contradicted his own lesson. The mother who encourages godliness while practicing dishonesty has likewise damaged her testimony. Neither parent can manufacture salvation in a child through religious routines. Each individual must personally believe the Gospel. **A Christian home is not built by displaying a Bible in a prominent location. It is built when the people living there submit their conduct to the authority of the Bible they possess.**

6. The Testimony That Children, Churches, and Neighbours Remember

The influence of a marriage frequently extends far beyond the husband and wife. Children observe conversations, disagreements, acts of kindness, expressions of affection, and the manner in which their parents handle disappointment. Ephesians 6:4 commands fathers, **"provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."** Colossians 3:21 adds, **"Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged."** These commandments establish direct parental responsibilities, but the relationship between husband and wife also contributes to the example children observe. A father who speaks respectfully about biblical authority while constantly humiliating his wife teaches a lesson far more destructive than the words of his family devotions. A mother who publicly praises Christian marriage while privately treating her husband with contempt does the same. **Children may forget the exact words of a family Bible study, but they are often remarkably capable of remembering whether the people teaching it practiced what they preached.**

First Peter 3:8–9 provides instruction concerning the character of Christian conduct: **"Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous: Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing."** Peter is addressing believers generally, and the passage must not be restricted to married couples. Nevertheless, those commandments should certainly govern Christians who share a household. Compassion, courtesy, restraint, and the refusal to retaliate are not virtues reserved for church meetings. A husband should not become a

different person the moment he enters his home, and a wife should not reserve her gracious speech exclusively for people outside the family. Genuine Christian testimony is demonstrated through conduct that remains consistent when public attention disappears. **The Lord did not command believers to demonstrate courtesy toward strangers and then authorize them to become unbearable toward the people who know them best.**

The local church also has a legitimate place in the spiritual life of a Christian household. Hebrews 10:25 warns believers against **"Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another."** The passage concerns Christian assembly and mutual encouragement, not the transfer of household authority to a congregation or minister. A husband and wife should benefit from sound preaching, faithful fellowship, and the ministry of the Word. Older believers can provide valuable examples of perseverance, humility, and practical wisdom. Titus 2 specifically recognizes the responsibility of older women to teach younger women appropriate godly conduct. Yet no pastor or church possesses authority to command a person to conceal abuse or disregard the clear commandments of Scripture. Religious leadership remains accountable to God. **A faithful local church should strengthen Christian homes through biblical truth, not manufacture a collection of impressive public appearances concealing private wickedness.**

7. The Years That Test the Vows: Faithfulness Until the Journey Ends

Proverbs 5:18 contains a command worth remembering long after the wedding photographs have begun to fade: **"Let thy fountain be blessed: and rejoice with the wife of thy youth."** The immediate chapter warns against sexual immorality and directs the husband toward faithful affection within marriage. Yet the expression **"the wife of thy youth"** naturally reminds us that the woman who shared the early years of marriage may also share the later years when circumstances have changed considerably. Physical appearance changes, professional ambitions may be fulfilled or abandoned, children grow older, and the responsibilities of life develop in unexpected directions. The marriage covenant was never intended to depend entirely upon the preservation of youthful excitement. A husband should not treat his wife as though her value diminishes whenever her appearance changes. A wife should not measure her husband's worth exclusively by his income, physical strength, or professional achievements. **A marriage that survives only while both people remain young was never prepared for the ordinary passage of time.**

Galatians 6:9 declares, **"And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not."** The immediate context concerns sowing and reaping in Christian conduct, including doing good toward others. It does not promise that every troubled marriage will automatically become peaceful after a particular number of years.

Nevertheless, the principle encourages perseverance in righteousness. Faithfulness may require repeated acts of kindness that receive little public recognition. A spouse may spend months caring for a husband or wife recovering from illness. Financial difficulties may require sacrifices that nobody outside the home understands. Aging parents, troubled children, and unexpected responsibilities may interrupt carefully arranged plans. During such seasons, obedience must be sustained by something greater than the pursuit of convenience. **Endurance is not demonstrated by announcing that one intends to remain faithful. It is demonstrated through the ordinary acts of faithfulness performed when remaining faithful requires genuine sacrifice.**

The Christian must also remember that this earthly life is not the final measure of spiritual success. Second Corinthians 5:10 declares, **"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad."** The passage concerns the believer's accountability before Christ and must not be confused with the Great White Throne judgment of Revelation 20. Neither does it teach salvation through marital performance. The saved person's eternal security rests upon the finished work of Jesus Christ. Nevertheless, Christian conduct matters. A husband will answer for his own behaviour, and a wife will answer for hers. Neither can excuse deliberate disobedience by pointing toward the failures of the other. The passage should produce humility rather than fear-driven religion. **The world may judge a marriage by its possessions, photographs, and public reputation. The Christian must remember that Almighty God knows what happened when the cameras were gone and the doors were closed.**

Conclusion

The institution of marriage began in Genesis when Almighty God formed the woman, brought her unto the man, and established the one-flesh relationship. It was not invented by human civilization, and its responsibilities were not created by modern religious traditions. Throughout this series, the Word of God has established the foundation of marriage, the obligations of companionship, the responsibilities of husband and wife, the necessity of sacrificial love, the importance of godly communication, the honour of physical faithfulness, and the wisdom required for household stewardship. But all these truths reach their practical test in the ordinary years of married life. A husband and wife may understand the doctrine and still require correction concerning their conduct. They may love one another sincerely and still encounter disagreements, disappointments, and unexpected trials. The Christian marriage must therefore be governed by more than memory of an impressive ceremony. **God did not establish marriage as a beautiful beginning followed by a lifetime of optional obligations. He established a covenant**

relationship in which faithfulness must continue after the excitement of beginning has passed.

The Gospel provides the spiritual foundation for Christian living without making marriage itself an instrument of salvation. Ephesians 2:8–9 declares, **"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast."** A husband is not justified by providing for his family, and a wife is not regenerated through submission to her husband. Neither earns eternal security by maintaining a successful household. Salvation belongs to Jesus Christ, who died for our sins, was buried, and rose again according to the Scriptures. Yet the grace that saves the believer also teaches godly conduct. Titus 2:12 declares, **"Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world."** The Christian home is one of the places where that instruction must become visible. **Grace does not excuse a husband from loving his wife, release a wife from godly responsibility, or permit either spouse to hide sinful conduct beneath an impressive religious testimony. Grace teaches the redeemed to live differently.**

The final word belongs to Psalm 127:1: **"Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it."** A husband and wife can purchase property, arrange furniture, establish routines, accumulate possessions, and create an impressive appearance of domestic success. None of those accomplishments guarantees a godly home. The foundation must be the authority of Almighty God and the willingness of those within the household to obey His Word. That obedience must reach beyond the wedding ceremony into ordinary conversations, financial decisions, family responsibilities, physical affection, personal repentance, and faithfulness during difficulty. The husband must love and cherish his wife. The wife must fulfill her biblical responsibilities with wisdom and godly strength. Both must reject bitterness, dishonesty, selfishness, and revenge while practicing kindness, truth, patience, and forgiveness. Where serious wrongdoing exists, righteousness requires truth and accountability rather than the preservation of appearances. Where ordinary difficulties arise, charity and faithfulness must govern the response. **A Christian marriage is not proven by two people who never stumble, never disagree, and never encounter hardship. It is demonstrated by two people who continue bringing their lives beneath the authority of God's Word, refusing to make excuses for sin, and faithfully carrying the responsibilities He has entrusted to them. The world can teach a couple how to arrange an unforgettable wedding, but only Almighty God has given the instructions for building a home that honours Him. The wedding may last a day, the marriage may endure for decades, but the testimony of a home governed by the Word of God can reach far beyond the lives of those who built it. That is Marriage by the Book.**

Marriage by the Book – Conclusion

Covenant, Companionship, and Christian Order

When Almighty God established the first marriage in the garden of Eden, He did not consult a committee, commission a study, conduct a public opinion survey, or wait for civilization to develop a theory concerning human relationships. He created the man, fashioned the woman, brought her unto him, and established the institution that would become the foundation of human family life. Genesis 2:24 declares, **"Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh."** There is the original arrangement, established before sin entered the world, before Israel received the law, before the first government was organized, and before the New Testament Church was revealed. Marriage was not an invention of fallen humanity. It came from the Creator Himself. And after examining the Scriptures throughout this ten-part series, one conclusion stands above every human argument: **God has never surrendered His authority over the institution He established.** The world may alter its customs, rewrite its legislation, rearrange its social expectations, and produce another generation of experts determined to explain why the Bible needs correcting, but none of that changes what God said in Genesis. The Creator does not require permission from His creatures to define His own creation. The foundation remains exactly where He placed it, regardless of how determined mankind becomes to build somewhere else.

The great difficulty with marriage has never been that God provided insufficient instructions. The difficulty is that human beings possess an extraordinary ability to disregard instructions while complaining about the consequences. A man can spend thousands of dollars purchasing tools, equipment, and materials to construct a house, yet he would be considered foolish if he deliberately ignored every principle necessary to keep the structure standing. But people regularly approach marriage with precisely that attitude. They enter a covenant established by God, disregard His commands concerning love, faithfulness, responsibility, submission, charity, and holiness, and then express complete astonishment when the relationship becomes miserable. Psalm 127:1 declares, **"Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it."** That passage does not condemn honest work or responsible planning. It establishes the futility of human effort divorced from dependence upon God. A household may possess beautiful furniture, expensive decorations, modern conveniences, and enough possessions to impress the entire neighbourhood while its occupants remain spiritually bankrupt. **You can purchase a house with money, furnish it with money, and maintain it with money, but you cannot purchase the obedience to God that makes a Christian home what it ought to be.** A

building is not made righteous by the size of its mortgage, and a marriage is not made godly by the beauty of its wedding photographs.

Throughout this series, we have examined the divine origin of marriage and the seriousness of the relationship established through leaving, cleaving, and becoming one flesh. Those expressions are not sentimental decorations intended to make a wedding ceremony sound more impressive. They establish obligations that reach into the ordinary activities of married life. A husband and wife form a new household with responsibilities and loyalties that must be recognized by both participants. Parents should be honoured without being permitted to govern every decision belonging to the married couple. Outside relationships should be maintained without allowing them to destroy the companionship of marriage. The husband and wife remain personally accountable to God, yet their union creates obligations that cannot be dismissed whenever personal convenience becomes more attractive than faithfulness. Malachi 2:14 identifies the wife as **"thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant."** The immediate passage concerns God's rebuke of treachery among His covenant people Israel, but the seriousness of marital faithfulness is unmistakable. **A covenant is not a collection of beautiful words spoken before witnesses and forgotten when circumstances become inconvenient. It is a solemn obligation that must be honoured when nobody is standing nearby to applaud the performance.** The wedding establishes a public beginning; the marriage reveals whether the promises meant anything after the celebration ended.

We have also examined the husband's headship, a doctrine that has been attacked by those who reject God's order and abused by those who desire authority without accountability. Ephesians 5:23 declares, **"For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church."** That statement remains true regardless of cultural opposition. But the same Apostle immediately commands, **"Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it"** (Ephesians 5:25). There is the responsibility that exposes every selfish distortion of biblical leadership. The husband is not appointed to become a little dictator ruling his household through intimidation, cruelty, threats, or personal arrogance. He is commanded to love, nourish, cherish, provide, protect, and exercise his responsibilities beneath the authority of Jesus Christ. Colossians 3:19 declares, **"Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them."** First Peter 3:7 requires the husband to give his wife honour. **A man who continually announces that he is the head of the household while refusing to demonstrate Christlike love has not established biblical leadership. He has merely demonstrated that he enjoys possessing a title considerably more than he enjoys fulfilling its responsibilities.** Headship is not a prize awarded to the husband for being male. It is a

responsibility assigned by God, and the man who occupies that position must answer to the God who assigned it.

The wife's responsibilities have likewise been established by Scripture, not by human custom or modern opinion. Ephesians 5:22 declares, **“Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.”** Colossians 3:18 adds, **“Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord.”** Those commandments cannot be erased without rejecting the authority of the Word of God. Yet submission does not require a woman to surrender her conscience, intelligence, spiritual accountability, or responsibility to obey the Lord. The virtuous woman of Proverbs 31 possesses industry, strength, sound judgment, financial understanding, generosity, and wisdom. She considers a field and purchases it. She provides for her household. She speaks with wisdom, and the law of kindness governs her tongue. Proverbs 31:30 declares, **“Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the LORD, she shall be praised.”** There is the biblical portrait of godly womanhood. **The Christian wife does not need to overthrow her husband to demonstrate strength, and she does not need to become helpless to demonstrate submission.** The woman who fears the LORD possesses something infinitely more valuable than the temporary approval of a world that cannot agree with itself concerning the meaning of marriage.

But perhaps one of the most important truths established throughout these studies is that marriage was designed for companionship rather than competition. Genesis 2:18 records God's declaration, **“It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him.”** The woman was not created as Adam's enemy, and Adam was not given a wife merely to possess somebody who would perform his personal instructions. God established a relationship in which man and woman could share the responsibilities of human life within the order He had appointed. Ecclesiastes 4:9 declares, **“Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour.”** The passage concerns companionship generally, but its principle applies naturally to marriage. A husband and wife should be able to face life's burdens together rather than continually manufacturing additional burdens for one another. They may possess different abilities, responsibilities, and judgments without turning every difference into a contest for superiority. **A marriage is not strengthened when two people become experts at defeating each other. It is strengthened when both become more concerned about obeying God than proving their own importance.** The Lord established companionship because two people working together can accomplish what rivalry continually destroys.

And then there is the tongue, that remarkably small member of the human body capable of transforming an otherwise peaceful household into something resembling a battlefield.

Proverbs 18:21 declares, **“Death and life are in the power of the tongue.”** A husband can provide faithfully, attend church regularly, and defend sound doctrine while steadily damaging his marriage through contempt, criticism, sarcasm, and uncontrolled anger. A wife can fulfill numerous household responsibilities while destroying companionship through humiliation, bitterness, careless accusations, and the continual rehearsal of old offenses. James 1:19 commands believers to be **“swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath.”** That instruction should be practiced at home before it is delivered as excellent advice to everybody outside it. Ephesians 4:29 commands speech that ministers grace to the hearers. A wedding ceremony does not provide permission to abandon those commandments. **The person who can speak graciously to strangers but continually wounds his spouse has not discovered some mysterious difficulty in communication. He has demonstrated that he is willing to exercise restraint where public reputation is concerned while neglecting it where Christian responsibility demands it most.** A godly home needs truth without cruelty, correction without contempt, and disagreements that do not become excuses for personal warfare.

We have also considered the honour of the marriage bed and the necessity of physical faithfulness. Hebrews 13:4 declares, **“Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.”** That one verse destroys the two opposite errors that have corrupted so much teaching concerning intimacy. God does not condemn the lawful physical relationship He established within marriage, and He does not approve the sexual immorality that fallen humanity continually attempts to excuse. Proverbs 5 instructs the husband to rejoice with the wife of his youth, while First Corinthians 7 establishes reciprocal obligations between husband and wife. The physical relationship must be governed by charity, faithfulness, consideration, and honour rather than selfish demands, manipulation, or coercion. The world has produced an entire industry dedicated to separating sexual pleasure from covenant responsibility, but Scripture refuses to recognize that separation as righteousness. **A wedding ring does not sanctify selfishness, and the marriage covenant does not authorize cruelty.** Faithfulness must govern the eyes, the imagination, private communications, personal conduct, and the relationship between husband and wife. A person cannot honestly celebrate the sanctity of marriage while deliberately cultivating the lusts that destroy it.

Financial stewardship has provided another searching examination of the Christian household. First Timothy 5:8 warns that the person who deliberately refuses to provide for his own household has denied the faith. Proverbs 22:7 declares, **“the borrower is servant to the lender.”** First Timothy 6:10 identifies the love of money as the root of all evil. These passages expose the dangers of laziness, reckless borrowing, covetousness, dishonesty, and the endless pursuit of material possessions. A husband and wife can accumulate an

impressive collection of expensive belongings while their relationship steadily deteriorates beneath the weight of debt, secrecy, and conflicting priorities. They may spend years attempting to impress people whose opinions will mean absolutely nothing when the bills arrive. Hebrews 13:5 commands believers to be content with such things as they have, and Philippians 4 demonstrates the Apostle Paul's ability to endure both abundance and need through the strength of Christ. **A larger income does not automatically produce greater wisdom, and a beautiful house cannot compensate for a household governed by bitterness and financial deception.** Money is a useful servant, but it becomes a miserable master when the desire to possess it begins determining every important decision.

Yet none of these responsibilities can be practiced faithfully without confronting the problem of sin. Two Christians entering marriage do not become two perfect human beings simply because they have exchanged vows. The husband retains the capacity for selfishness, pride, anger, and foolishness. The wife remains capable of bitterness, dishonesty, resentment, and disobedience. Both may possess legitimate grievances against the other, and both may become guilty of using those grievances to excuse personal wrongdoing. Ephesians 4:31–32 commands believers to put away bitterness, wrath, anger, clamour, evil speaking, and malice, and then declares, **“And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.”** There is the foundation for Christian forgiveness. The believer who has received mercy through Jesus Christ should demonstrate a forgiving disposition toward others. **A man who rejoices that God has forgiven his sins while demanding that his wife spend the remainder of her life paying for every mistake has developed a remarkably selective appreciation of grace.** The same warning applies to the wife who preserves every offense as ammunition for the next disagreement.

Nevertheless, forgiveness must never be confused with pretending that serious wickedness has become harmless. Genuine repentance requires the acknowledgment and forsaking of sin, not merely the ability to deliver an impressive apology whenever consequences become uncomfortable. Proverbs 28:13 declares, **“He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.”** The offender must not demand restored trust while deliberately continuing the conduct that destroyed it. Nor does Scripture require a person to remain exposed to violence, threats, sexual coercion, or serious abuse without seeking protection and legitimate assistance. The Bible commands husbands to love and honour their wives, not to terrorize them, and it requires wives to conduct themselves faithfully without excusing deliberate wrongdoing. Forgiveness and accountability are not enemies. Truth and charity are not contradictory responsibilities. **The Christian home is not preserved by concealing**

wickedness beneath an attractive religious appearance. It is strengthened when sin is honestly confronted, repentance is genuine, and obedience replaces the conduct that produced the injury. A household that merely looks peaceful before outsiders has not necessarily learned to live righteously before God.

There is also the matter of endurance, which distinguishes the promises made at a wedding from the faithfulness demonstrated during the years that follow. Ecclesiastes 4:10 declares, **"For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up."** The passage beautifully illustrates the value of companionship during difficulty. The strength of marriage is not measured merely by the pleasant days when both husband and wife enjoy good health, sufficient income, and agreeable circumstances. It is revealed when sickness enters the household, when financial hardship requires sacrifice, when aging changes the abilities of the body, and when responsibilities become more demanding than anyone anticipated. There may be seasons when the husband carries burdens that his wife cannot presently bear. There may be others when the wife demonstrates extraordinary faithfulness while her husband experiences weakness or illness. **The marriage vow is not tested most severely when the bride is beautiful, the groom is strong, the bills are paid, and everybody is smiling for photographs. It is tested when the promises must be kept without the assistance of convenient circumstances.** That is where biblical charity becomes more than a pleasant expression.

The testimony of a Christian marriage also reaches beyond the husband and wife. Children observe the conduct of their parents long before they possess the maturity to explain every doctrine being taught. They hear the tone of ordinary conversations. They recognize whether affection is genuine, whether disagreements become opportunities for cruelty, and whether their parents practice the convictions they publicly defend. Ephesians 6:4 commands fathers to bring their children up **"in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."** But a father who teaches biblical authority while mistreating his wife contradicts the very instruction he claims to value. A mother who teaches kindness while continually humiliating her husband damages her own testimony. John 13:35 records the Lord Jesus Christ declaring, **"By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."** The immediate instruction concerns His disciples, but the principle exposes the importance of genuine Christian love wherever believers are found. **A family Bible displayed upon the coffee table may impress visitors, but the conduct of the people living in the house reveals whether its instructions possess any practical authority.** Children need more than parents who can quote Scripture. They need parents willing to obey it.

One of the most extraordinary truths uncovered in this series is the doctrinal connection between marriage and the relationship of Jesus Christ to His Church. Ephesians 5:32 declares, **“This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.”** The first marriage in Genesis was a literal historical institution established before the fall of man. The New Testament Church is a spiritual body revealed in its proper dispensational setting through the ministry of the Apostle Paul. These truths must not be confused. Adam and Eve were not baptized by the Holy Spirit into the New Testament body of Christ, and an earthly marriage ceremony cannot produce spiritual regeneration. Yet the Apostle reveals that the one-flesh relationship provides an illustration of the union between Christ and His Church. The husband is commanded to love his wife as Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for it. That is not a comparison that should inflate the husband's pride. It ought to bring him under conviction. **The earthly marriage points toward something greater than itself, and the man who claims to illustrate Christ's love while practicing selfish domination has thoroughly misunderstood the picture.** The doctrine reaches into Heaven, but its practical responsibilities must be demonstrated in the household.

This brings us to an essential distinction that must never be lost amid the discussion of Christian marriage: a successful marriage does not save anybody, and an unsuccessful marriage does not establish that the Gospel has failed. Ephesians 2:8–9 declares, **“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.”** Salvation is not earned through headship, submission, financial provision, physical faithfulness, or domestic accomplishment. The sinner is saved through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, who died for our sins, was buried, and rose again according to the Scriptures. The believer's eternal security rests upon the finished work of Christ, not upon perfect performance within an earthly household. Yet saving grace does not make holiness optional. Titus 2:12 declares that grace teaches us **“that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world.”** That instruction applies to the husband, the wife, and every other redeemed sinner. **Grace is not permission to ignore the commandments of God. It is the very grace that teaches the believer to abandon ungodliness and walk in obedience.** A marriage should therefore reflect the transforming influence of divine truth rather than become another excuse for continuing in sin.

And now we arrive at the question that every husband and wife must answer personally. Will the Word of God govern the home, or will the occupants continue attempting to govern the Word of God? Will the husband accept the responsibility of sacrificial love, or will he continue demanding recognition of his authority while ignoring the commandments that accompany it? Will the wife demonstrate godly wisdom and recognize the order established by the Lord, or will she allow worldly rebellion to determine her conduct? Will

both practice forgiveness, patience, honesty, faithfulness, and responsible stewardship, or will they remain more interested in identifying the other's failures than correcting their own? These questions cannot be settled through another expensive ceremony, an impressive public testimony, or a collection of religious expressions. Second Corinthians 5:10 reminds believers that **"we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ."** That is not the Great White Throne judgment, nor is it a threat that salvation must be maintained through works. It is a reminder that Christian conduct matters before the Lord. **A husband and wife may convince their relatives, friends, and congregation that everything is admirable within their household, but Almighty God has never required a public report before He can determine what is happening behind the front door.**

So the final word of Marriage by the Book must return to the foundation upon which the first home was established. God created the man. God fashioned the woman. God established the marriage relationship. God gave instructions concerning the responsibilities of husband and wife. God revealed the spiritual significance of marriage in connection with Christ and His Church. And God has never once instructed fallen humanity to improve His design by abandoning His Word. A Christian marriage will encounter trials, disagreements, disappointments, and circumstances that neither spouse anticipated. Its occupants will require correction, humility, patience, repentance, and forgiveness. But the answer is not to surrender biblical authority whenever obedience becomes difficult. The answer is to return to the Scriptures and do what God has commanded. Psalm 127:1 remains the final principle: **"Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it."** The world can teach a couple how to arrange a spectacular wedding, purchase an expensive residence, and maintain an impressive public appearance. It cannot improve upon the foundation established by Almighty God. **The greatest Christian home is not necessarily the largest, the wealthiest, or the most admired. It is the home where the Word of God is believed, where sin is not excused, where responsibilities are faithfully carried, where charity governs conduct, and where Jesus Christ is honoured above personal pride. The wedding may last a day, the marriage may endure for decades, and the testimony may influence generations yet unborn. But the foundation must remain the same from beginning to end: not marriage according to the world, not marriage according to human invention, not marriage according to religious tradition, but Marriage by the Book — Covenant, Companionship, and Christian Order.**

VERSEQUEST MINISTRIES

MARRIAGE BY THE BOOK

A Biblical Study of God's Design, Duties, Blessings, Challenges, and Lifelong Faithfulness in Marriage

THE COMPLETE SERIES AT A GLANCE

A systematic, Scripture-saturated study of marriage from God's original design to the daily faithfulness that keeps a Christian home strong and fruitful through every season of life.

CENTRAL TRUTH

Marriage is God's institution, to be understood, entered, and lived out according to His Word.

OVERALL PURPOSE

To show that God's instructions for marriage are sufficient to build, guide, protect, and keep a lasting, Christ-honoring home.

PRIMARY SCRIPTURES FOR THE SERIES

- Genesis 2:18, 22–24
- Matthew 19:4–6
- Ephesians 5:22–33
- 1 Peter 3:1–7
- Colossians 3:12–14
- Ephesians 4:31–32
- Psalm 127:1
- Ecclesiastes 4:9–12

THE TEN-PART SERIES

1. **God's Design for Marriage** — Genesis 2:18, 22–24; Matthew 19:4–6
2. **Choosing a Lifelong Partner** — 2 Corinthians 6:14; Proverbs 18:22
3. **The Roles of Husband and Wife** — Ephesians 5:22–33; 1 Peter 3:1–7
4. **Building Unity in the Home** — Amos 3:3; Philippians 2:1–4
5. **Love, Respect, and Honor** — Ephesians 5:33; Romans 12:10
6. **Communication and Conflict** — James 1:19–20; Proverbs 15:1
7. **Finances and Responsibilities** — Proverbs 3:9–10; 1 Timothy 5:8
8. **Intimacy and Purity in Marriage** — Hebrews 13:4; 1 Corinthians 7:3–5
9. **Seasons, Trials, and Change** — Ecclesiastes 3:1–4; Romans 8:28
10. **Keeping the Home Together** — Ephesians 4:31–32; Colossians 3:12–14

KEY THEMES THROUGHOUT THE SERIES

- Marriage as a divine institution
- God's design, order, and authority
- Mutual love, respect, and submission
- Unity, communication, and conflict resolution
- Faithfulness, purity, and sexual integrity
- Provision, stewardship, and shared responsibility
- Endurance through seasons and trials
- Forgiveness, grace, and restoration
- The influence of marriage on children and others
- A lasting testimony for the glory of Christ

GOD'S FOUNDATION FOR MARRIAGE

- Instituted by God, not man (Gen. 2:18).
- A lifelong covenant (Matt. 19:4–6).
- A picture of Christ and His Church (Eph. 5:31–32).

THE HUSBAND'S RESPONSIBILITIES

- Love sacrificially (Eph. 5:25).
- Lead with godly wisdom (1 Cor. 11:3).
- Provide and protect (1 Tim. 5:8).
- Honor and value his wife (1 Pet. 3:7).

THE WIFE'S RESPONSIBILITIES

- Be a help meet (Gen. 2:18).
- Submit in the Lord (Eph. 5:22; Col. 3:18).
- Show respect and honor (Eph. 5:33).
- Keep and build the home (Titus 2:4–5).

THE BLESSINGS OF A GODLY MARRIAGE

- Companionship and support (Eccl. 4:9–12).
- Strength in times of trouble (Prov. 17:17).
- A stable home for children (Ps. 127:3–5).
- A powerful testimony to others (Josh. 24:15).

REAL-LIFE CHALLENGES AND GOD'S HELP

- Disappointments, illness, financial pressure, and change.
- The need for endurance (Col. 3:12–13).
- Forgiveness and restoration (Eph. 4:31–32).
- Seeking help, counsel, and accountability when needed.

DISTINGUISHING FORGIVENESS FROM TOLERATING ABUSE

- Christians are commanded to forgive (Eph. 4:32; Col. 3:13).
- Forgiveness follows genuine repentance (Prov. 28:13; 1 John 1:9).
- Forgiveness does not require ongoing exposure to abuse or destructive behavior.
- It is biblical and necessary to seek protection, help, and godly counsel when there is abuse or danger (Prov. 22:3; Rom. 13:1–4).

SPIRITUAL RESOURCES THAT STRENGTHEN A MARRIAGE

- Prayer together and for each other (Phil. 4:6–7).
- Personal holiness and obedience (1 Pet. 1:15–16).
- Faithful church fellowship (Heb. 10:24–25).
- Family worship and the Word of God (Deut. 6:6–7).

THE HOME'S INFLUENCE ON CHILDREN AND OTHERS

- A godly marriage provides stability, security, and instruction (Prov. 22:6).
- Children learn love, duty, and faithfulness by example (Deut. 6:4–9).
- A Christ-honoring home can encourage newer and younger believers (Titus 2:3–8).

THE BOTTOM LINE

- Marriage is not a fairy tale, but a lifelong, God-given partnership.
- It is strengthened by obedience, grace, forgiveness, and endurance.
- "Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it" (Ps. 127:1).

CONCLUSION

A MARRIAGE THAT FOLLOWS THE BOOK IS NOT PERFECT, BUT IT IS STABLE, FRUITFUL, AND ETERNALLY SIGNIFICANT, BECAUSE IT IS BUILT ON THE WORD OF GOD.