

Making a Biblical Marriage

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Making a Biblical Marriage

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Second Edition

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Introduction

My wife and I married in January, 1991, and we shared a passion for learning and living Scripture. Our walk with God and spiritual growth was and is the key to our marital strength and stability. The wisdom of God's Word daily applied has blessed our marriage. We've had our struggles and failures, but we've also experienced *love* and *grace, forgiveness* and *encouragement* (some of the subjects in this book). We've learned the health of our Christian marriage is directly proportional to our individual spiritual growth. As goes our spiritual life, so goes our marriage. When we are growing spiritually and manifesting the fruit of the Holy Spirit (Eph. 5:18; Gal. 5:16, 22-23), our marriage does well. When our spiritual walk stagnates, or we are living selfishly and manifesting the fruit of the flesh (Gal. 5:17-21), our marriage does poorly. God has done His part to bless us spiritually (Eph. 1:3), but it's our responsibility to learn His Word and be filled with the Spirit and walk in the Spirit (Eph. 5:18; Gal. 5:16, 25). Conversely, we are not to grieve the Spirit by sin (Eph. 4:30), or quench the Spirit by resisting His will (1 Thess. 5:19). Our spiritual walk requires knowledge, for learning God's Word necessarily precedes living His will (Rom. 12:1-2; 2 Tim. 2:15; 3:16-17; 1 Pet. 2:2; 2 Pet. 3:18).

I thank God for the blessings He's provided us over the years. Though there have been difficult times, and times of failure, the good memories far outweigh the bad. Most of what is set forth in this book is predicated on biblical teaching, though I may, at times, speak from personal experience. I intentionally use repetition throughout this book to emphasize certain biblical truths. I write this book

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as a Christian man, but my lovely wife has edited every word, so her voice is on every page. The purpose of this book is to offer biblical direction to the Christian couple who desire to glorify God in their marriage.

Steven R. Cook, D.Min.

Marriage Defined

Chapter 1

Marriage Defined

Marriage is a divine institution originally designed to permanently unite a man and a woman (Gen. 2:18-25). It is not a human invention. The first couple was created in God's image to live under His provision and authority, to walk in fellowship with Him, and to fulfill the specific purpose of ruling over His creation (Gen. 1:26-28). They were to complement each other. All three members of the Trinity¹ were involved in the creation of Adam and Eve (Gen. 1:26-28). "God created man in His own image [Heb. *צֵלֶם tselem*], in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them" (Gen 1:27). Adam and Eve were special, created with intelligence, volition, and purpose. They were created for a relationship; first with God, then with each other, then the animals and world around them. They were to fulfill the divine mandate to "be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth" (Gen. 1:28). Adam and Eve were created in a state of maturity as perfectly functioning adults and were gifted with brilliant minds that were able to correctly perceive their environment and to

¹ The three persons of the Godhead include God the Father (Gal. 1:1; Phil. 2:11), God the Son (John 1:1, 14; 20:28), and God the Holy Spirit (Acts 5:3-4). God is one in essence (Deut. 6:4), and three in Person (Matt. 28:19; 1 Pet. 1:2).

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properly communicate with God and each other. They possessed a clear sense of purpose under the authority of God.

Genesis chapter one provides a snapshot of the creation of the first couple; however, in Genesis chapter two, we learn there was a short lapse of time between the creation of Adam and Eve (cf. 1 Tim. 2:13). Adam, by himself, was placed in the Garden of Eden with the positive command “to cultivate it and keep it” (Gen 2:15). Adam was free to work and enjoy the beauty and fruit of the Garden. God blessed Adam and provided for him (Gen. 2:15-16), but also promised spiritual and physical death if he sinned (Gen. 2:17). Later, both Adam and Eve would eat the forbidden fruit (Gen. 3:1-8), but Adam’s sin alone would bring judgment upon himself and the world, for which he was responsible. When Adam fell, the world under his care fell with him (Gen. 3:17-19; Rom. 5:12-14; 8:22-23; 1 Tim. 2:13-14).

Originally, Adam was created sinless, with the unhindered capacity to walk with God and serve Him. Though he was sinless, Adam was not complete. God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper [Heb. עֵזֶר *ezer*] suitable for him” (Gen. 2:18). Before God created the first woman, He took time to educate Adam about his relational incompleteness. God brought a multitude of animals before Adam (most likely in pairs of male and female), and after observing and naming them (Gen. 2:19), Adam realized “there was not found a helper [Heb. עֵזֶר *ezer*] suitable for him” (Gen 2:20). God corrected what Adam could not. The Lord caused Adam to fall asleep and “took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh at that place”

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(Gen. 2:21). God then “fashioned into a woman the rib which He had taken from the man, and brought her to the man” (Gen. 2:22). This was a divinely arranged marriage.

Woman was taken not from Adam’s head to dominate him, nor from his feet to be trodden down, but from under his arm to be protected, and from near his heart to be loved.²

The wife was created to “help” her husband (Gen. 2:20). The word *helper* (Heb. עֵזֶר *ezer*) is an exalted term that is sometimes employed of God who helps the needy (Gen. 49:25; Ex. 18:4; 1 Sam. 7:12; Isa. 41:10; Ps. 10:14; 33:20). Just as God helps His people to do His will, so the wife is called to help her husband serve the Lord and bring Him glory. The wife is also to respect her husband (Eph. 5:33), both in private and in public.

Sin changed humanity and the world in which we live. Satan (a fallen angel) attacked the first marriage and tempted the man and woman to disobey God (Gen. 3:1-7). Adam and Eve listened to Satan and rejected God’s will (Gen. 2:15-17; 3:1-8), and sin was introduced into the human race and the whole world is now under a curse (Gen. 3:8-19; Rom. 5:12-19; 8:20-22). Eve was deceived by Satan, but Adam sinned with his eyes open (1 Tim. 2:14).

² William MacDonald, *Believer’s Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments*, ed. Arthur Farstad (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1995), 35.

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The institution of marriage continued after the historic fall of Adam and Eve and took on various ceremonies based on ever changing social customs. The Bible directs believers to marry believers (1 Cor. 7:39; cf. 2 Cor. 6:14-15), but does not prescribe a specific ceremony to follow, or vows to take, but leaves these matters for people to decide for themselves. Marriage is divinely illustrative of Yahweh's relationship with Israel (Isa. 54:5), and Christ's relationship with the church (2 Cor. 11:2). Marriage is to be holy, because God is holy (1 Pet. 1:15-16). Marriage is to be loving, because God is love (1 John 4:16-21).

God designed the husband to be the loving leader to guide the relationship into His will, and the wife is to walk in harmony with him (Gen. 2:18; 21-23; cf. Eph. 5:25-33). The husband is to love his wife as Christ loves the church (Eph. 5:25). Biblically, this is called *agape* love.

Love [Grk. ἀγάπη *agape*] is patient, love is kind *and* is not jealous; love does not brag *and* is not arrogant, does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong *suffered*, does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails (1 Cor. 13:4-8a)

Agape love brings God into every relationship, provides spiritual nourishment, conforms to God's will, and seeks God's glory. It stands the test of time and survives in the furnace of affliction. It is sacrificial (Eph. 5:25; cf. Matt. 20:28; John 13:34; 15:13; Rom. 5:8; 14:15; 15:3), understanding and honoring (1 Pet. 3:7), and greater than

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feelings (Col. 3:19). It is, in fact, God's love, born in the heart of the believer who walks with God and desires His closeness.

God's love comes from God, and only those who know God and walk with Him will manifest His love (1 John 4:10-21). There is a biblical love and there is a worldly love. Biblical love has its source in God who always seeks our best. Worldly love is deceptive, self-serving and destructive, just as Satan is deceptive, self-serving and destructive. We cannot give what we do not have, and only those who know and walk with God can manifest His love. Anyone who claims to love but does not know God or walk with Him is a deceiver, and this one leads others into sin. A successful marriage is built on Scripture and displays God's love.

Where there is constant spiritual development in the life of a Christian couple, there will be the gradual manifestation of "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, [and] self-control" (Gal. 5:22-23a). We manifest these qualities because we walk with God and desire to reflect His character. Walking with God means we become more and more like Him, gradually manifesting His attributes, such as *righteousness* (Ps. 11:7; 119:137), *justice* (Ps. 9:7-8; 50:6), *holiness* (Ps. 99:9), *truthfulness* (2 Sam. 7:28; John 17:17; 1 John 5:20), *love* (Jer. 31:3; 1 John 4:7-12, 16), *faithfulness* (Deut. 7:9; Lam. 3:23; 2 Tim. 2:13), *mercy* (Ps. 86:15; Luke 6:36; Tit. 3:5), and *graciousness* (Ps. 111:4; 116:5; 1 Pet. 5:10). These attributes will strengthen the marriage, but they must be pursued intelligently and by choice.

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Marriage Vows & Ceremonies

Marriage is a covenant relationship (Prov. 2:17; Ezek. 16:8; Mal. 2:14-15; Matt. 19:6). In Scripture, the word *covenant* (Heb. בְּרִית *berith*, Grk. διαθήκη *diatheke*) is used of a *treaty, alliance, or contract*. The strength of a covenant depends on the person, or persons, who enter into it. Some covenants are vertical between God and individuals or groups, and some are horizontal between people. Some of God's covenants are unilateral, in which God acts alone and unconditionally promises to provide and bless another, either a person or group (e.g. Noahic covenant, Abrahamic covenant, Davidic covenant, New Covenant, etc.). In a unilateral covenant, God will always bless the recipients, and there is no fear of God doing otherwise, because the blessing is in no way conditioned on any action by those whom God assures blessing (e.g. Gen. 12:1-3; Jer. 31:31-34). Some of God's covenants are bilateral, in which blessing or cursing is conditioned on obedience to stated laws (e.g. Adamic covenant and Mosaic covenant). In a bilateral covenant, God is faithful to bless and curse depending on compliance to the agreed upon conditions set forth (see Deuteronomy Chapter 28). God is always faithful to keep His promises in both unilateral and bilateral covenants. In the Bible there are examples of people who made bilateral covenants among themselves (Gen. 21:27; 31:44-54; Josh. 9:15; 1 Sam. 18:3; 2 Sam. 3:12-13). Covenants made by people are generally bilateral, depending on the faithfulness of each person to keep their promise.

In making covenants God was solemnly invoked as a witness (31:53), whence the expression “a covenant of the Lord” (1 Sam. 20:8; cf. Jer. 34:18–19; Ezek.

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17:19), and an oath was sworn (Gen. 21:31). Accordingly, a breach of covenant was regarded as a heinous sin (Ezek. 17:12–20). The marriage contract is called “the covenant of ... God” (Prov. 2:17).³

The marriage covenant is a bilateral agreement in which both persons promise, before God and others, to love each other faithfully. It is regarded as a bilateral covenant—depending on the faithfulness of each person to each other—because God permits a way out of the relationship by divorce (Deut. 24:1-3; Matt. 5:32; 19:8-9). A unilateral covenant would make no stipulations on the relationship.

The marriage covenant glorifies God when the man and woman commit to love each other, to seek God’s best in each other, and to remain faithful to their promises. Typically, marriage vows are thoughtful, addressing the reality of good and bad circumstances, the influence of wealth or poverty, sickness and health. A vow is a promise, and a promise is only as strong as the person who makes it. Often we vow to be committed to each other and to endure all tests and trials until separated by death. We may not like the tests or trials that come our way, but it’s only in those situations that a person’s integrity becomes manifest.

Marriage ceremonies mentioned in the Bible varied depending on the people and culture. Sometimes we read about arranged marriages without any mention of a wedding

³ Merrill F. Unger, et al., “Covenant” in *The New Unger’s Bible Dictionary*, Rev. and updated ed. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1988).

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ceremony at all (Gen. 21:21; 38:6; 1 Sam. 18:17). Other times we read of great feasting and celebration during the wedding (Gen. 29:22; Judg. 14:12; Matt. 22:1-12; Luke 14:8-11; John 2:1-10). The Bible does not prescribe a specific marriage ceremony, and each couple is free to follow whatever customs are particular to their culture so long as it conforms to the laws and customs of a nation (Rom. 13:1, 5; 1 Pet. 2:13-14).

Summary:

The Bible provides the explanation for the origin of the universe, mankind, and our purpose in life. It does not answer every question, but it does answer the important ones. From Scripture we understand God created the universe and all the creatures in it (Gen. 1-2; Heb. 11:3). The creation glorifies God by being and doing what He intended (Ps. 19:1-2). All three members of the Trinity were involved in the creation of Adam and Eve, who were uniquely created in God's image (Heb. *תְּצַלְמֵנוּ tselem*). Adam and Eve were created with intelligence, volition, and purpose. They were created for a relationship; first with God, then with each other, then the animals and world around them. God created Adam to be a servant-ruler over His creation (Gen. 1:26-28), to cultivate and keep the garden as a work-assignment (Gen. 2:5, 15), to name the animals (Gen. 2:19-20), to enjoy the vegetation as food (Gen. 1:29; 2:16), and to fellowship with Eve who was to help him fulfill God's will (Gen. 2:18, 21-24). Adam and Eve were created to function as a unit, to complement each other, walking in the same direction, listening to God's Word, doing God's work, enjoying God's provision, and together abstaining from what would injure their relationship with the Lord (Gen. 2:17). They had a

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clear sense of purpose under the direction of God. Sin damaged the relationship between God and mankind (Gen. 3:1-8), as well as the physical world (Gen. 3:9-24; Rom. 8:19-23). All of Adam and Eve's descendants inherited a sinful nature and live in a fallen world that is temporarily under Satan's dominion (Acts 26:18; Col. 1:13-14). Our sinful propensity constantly pushes us to operate independently of God, using His resources for our own sinful purposes (e.g. Tower of Babel, Gen. 11:1-9). However, human worth continues because the image of God—though marred—is retained (Gen. 9:6; Jam. 3:9). Though humanity is corrupted because of sin (Gen. 3:1-24), God still loves us (John 3:16-17), and by faith we can accept our value as human beings made in His image (Gen. 1:26-28; 9:6; Jam. 3:9). Our human experience is optimized when we are made spiritually alive (1 Pet. 1:3, 23), and when we walk with God and glorify Him in all things (1 Cor. 10:31; Eph. 2:10; 4:1-3).

Married couples are united before God and others by means of covenant vows. The vows are only as strong as the people who make them. That God permits divorce in some cases suggests that the marriage is a bilateral covenant, depending on faithfulness to the relationship (Deut. 24:1-3; Matt. 5:32; 19:8-9).

Chapter 2

Role Distinctions in Marriage

God is the sovereign Creator-Lord of the universe (Gen. 1:1; Ps. 115:3; 135:6; Dan. 4:35). He is infinitely good, and all good things were created by Him, for Him, and to His glory. From Genesis to Revelation, God governs the lives of people and nations. We exist because God gives us life (Ps. 100:3), “for in Him we live and move and exist” (Acts 17:28; cf. 1 Sam. 2:6). He determines the duration of our existence, having final control over the day and cause of our death. David knew this truth and lived in the comfort of God’s sovereign care, stating, “in Your book were all written the days that were ordained *for me*, when as yet there was not one of them” (Ps. 139:16). The Lord also controls when and where we live in history, for “He made from one *man* every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined *their* appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation” (Acts 17:26). Even the great rulers of this world are under God’s control, for “It is He who changes the times and the seasons; He removes kings and establishes kings; He gives wisdom to wise men and knowledge to men of understanding” (Dan. 2:21). God has power over wealth and poverty, for “The LORD makes poor and rich; He brings low, He also exalts” (1 Sam. 2:7). The Lord is supreme over all His creation, “Whatever the LORD pleases, He does, in heaven and in earth, in the seas and in all deeps” (Ps. 135:6). There is no one who can understand all His ways, or stop what He has set in motion. “All the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, but He does according to His will in the host of heaven and *among* the inhabitants of earth; and

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no one can ward off His hand or say to Him, ‘What have You done?’” (Dan. 4:35). God allows fallen angels and humans to produce sin and evil, but they never act beyond or against His sovereign will (Job 1:1-21; Ps. 105:12-15; 1 Kings 22:19-23; 2 Cor. 12:7-10). Rebellious people do their best to shut God out, to suppress the revelation of His presence (Rom. 1:18-20), and to function under the illusion of autonomy. This is the great lie; for each breath we take depends on His grace. The opposite of autonomy is dependence, and the growing Christian realizes his total inability to function apart from God and, therefore, continually seeks Him for guidance and strength (Ps. 50:15; 86:5-7; 91:15; John 15:4-5).

Why discuss God’s sovereignty in a marriage book? There are at least two reasons: 1) Because it benefits the Christian husband and wife to know that marriage is a divine institution, sovereignly created by God for our benefit, and that the marriage union functions optimally within the framework of His guidance and care. 2) Because it benefits the Christian husband and wife to know that God Himself provides and protects the Christian couple who organize their marriage according to His design. God designed the marriage for a man and woman and He established their specific roles. Paul addresses marital roles in his letter to the Ephesians.

Wives, *be subject* to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself *being* the Savior of the body. But as the church is subject [Grk. ὑποτάσσω *hupotasso*] to Christ, so also the wives *ought to be* to their husbands in everything.

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Husbands, love [Grk. ἀγαπάω *agapao*] your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless. (Eph. 5:22-27)

The passage addresses Christian couples only and portrays the marriage as tri-personal, involving the husband, wife, and the Lord Jesus Christ (Eph. 5:22, 25). The Christian husband and wife are spiritually equal in God's sight (Gal. 3:28; 1 Pet. 3:7); however, spiritual equality should not be confused with functional equality. The husband is to be the leader of the home, as Christ is the head of the church, and the wife is to submit to her husband, as the church submits to Christ. Both the husband and wife fulfill God's expectations when they learn to function together as a unit, each executing their godly roles. The Christian man who agrees to marry automatically comes under the authority of God who directs his behavior according to Scripture. The wife who agrees to marry also comes under the authority of God who calls her to submit to her husband.

The word *subject* (some translations have submit) translates the Greek ὑποτάσσω *hypotasso* which was first used as a military term referring to someone who came under the authority of another. We benefit when we submit to the authority of our job supervisor, the police officer, the military commander, the teacher in the classroom, or the coach on the field. Biblical examples of submission include:

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the young Jesus submitting to Joseph and Mary (Luke 2:51), God the Son submitting to God the Father (1 Cor. 15:27-28), the church submitting to Christ (Eph. 1:22), the believer submitting to God (Heb. 12:9; Jam. 4:7), the believer submitting to the church pastor (1 Pet. 5:5; Heb. 13:17), Christians submitting to governmental authority (Rom. 13:1, 5; Tit. 3:1), the Christian wife submitting to her husband (Eph. 5:22, 24; Col. 3:18; Tit. 2:5; 1 Pet. 3:1; 5-6), and the husband submitting to Christ (1 Cor. 11:3). As Christians, we are to submit to God always, however, there are times when we should refuse to submit to human authorities, when those authorities seek to lead us outside of God's will (Ex. 1:22; 2:1-9; Dan. 3:1-18; 6:1-10; Acts 5:27-29).

Submission never implies inferiority. The Lord Jesus is submissive to God the Father, but in no way is He inferior to Him. Neither is the woman inferior to the man. In many ways she may be superior—in devotedness, in sympathy, in diligence, and in heroic endurance. But **wives** are commanded to **submit to their own husbands, as to the Lord**. In submitting to the authority of her husband, a wife is submitting to the Lord's authority. This in itself should remove any attitude of reluctance or rebellion.¹

Unfortunately, the word *submission* has, in many circles of society, become a negative word, where a mousy wife is portrayed as obsequious to the tyranny of her abusive

¹ William MacDonald, *Believer's Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments*, ed. Arthur Farstad (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1995), 1947.

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husband who only desires her oppression for selfish ends. Any husband who tries to make his wife submit, either by force or by manipulation, automatically fails as a husband, because he fails to honor his wife as an equal heir of the grace of God (1 Pet. 3:7) as well as respecting her choice to love him freely as an act of self-determination. Forced submission is a form of slavery in which the spouse is reduced to a non-person; without an identity, without a voice, without a life. Only an arrogant man would do such a thing; unfortunately, there are many arrogant men in the world. Thus, the word *submission* becomes a bad word with negative meaning when used in a nonbiblical way. The Bible never uses the word *submission* in this way. In Scripture, *submission* is right and beneficial when the one in authority is loving, serving, considerate, and wisely seeks the best for those whom they've been given responsibility.

The word “support” is a good synonym for the biblical concept of “submit.” A wife submits to her husband when she voluntarily organizes herself so she can complete her husband. A good example of this is her cooperating with him when they run a three-legged race. They have to work together to succeed. Submission is essential to achieve oneness in marriage.²

The authority of the Christian husband is bound by Scripture, and his wife is to submit to him and support him as long as he does not lead her outside God's will, for then

² Tom Constable, *Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible* (Galaxie Software, 2003), Eph. 5:22.

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she has not only the right but the duty to say *no*, as she submits to the Lord as the higher authority. There may be times when a wife is married to an unsaved man, or to a Christian who thinks and lives like the world. The Christian wife—in such cases—is to respect and support her husband as she is able, even when it is difficult, as she keeps her focus on God and His promises (1 Pet. 2:21-3:6).

The Christian wife is also described in Scripture as a *helper* (Heb. עֲזֵרָה *ezer*) to her husband. I've already explained from the first chapter that the word *helper* is a noble term, sometimes used of God Himself as he helps the needy (Gen. 49:25; Ex. 18:4; 1 Sam. 7:12; Ps. 10:14; 33:20; Isa. 41:10). Likewise, the wife helps her husband be the man God intends him to be, as she helps him glorify God and walk in His will. The wife is also called to love her husband (Tit. 2:4), and to respect him (Eph. 5:33). When there is love and trust from the husband, most wives will gladly surrender to his biblical leadership. The husband who is walking with God will love his wife.

The Christian husband is to love (ἀγαπάω *agapao*³) his wife as Christ loves the church (Eph. 5:25, 33); and he does this in submission to Christ who is his authority (1 Cor. 11:3). The husband is to live with his wife in an understanding way and to honor her as a fellow heir of the grace of God (1 Pet. 3:7), and he is to make his wife feel protected and safe, for there can be no love where fear is present (1 John 4:18). Biblical love is an act of the will that

³ In the Greek, this is a command of continuous action.

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seeks God's best in the life of another person. It is a love that supersedes emotion and cares more about others than self (Matt. 5:43-45; Phil. 2:3-4). Biblical love is gracious, unselfish, and given freely from the bounty of one's own resources, with an open hand, always for the benefit and joy of others, expecting nothing in return.

The husband's love is measured against the love of Jesus Christ. So how does Christ love? The greatest act of Christ's love is seen in the sacrifice of His life by which He saves and sanctifies the church (Eph. 5:23, 25). Christ is also full of grace and truth (John 1:14-17), He lightens the load of those who come to Him (Matt. 11:28-30; Mark 10:42-45), He builds up and protects (Matt. 16:18), He prayerfully intercedes (Rom. 8:34), He comforts (2 Thess. 2:16-17), He is faithful (2 Tim. 2:13), and He guides as the head of the body (Col. 1:18-23). The Christian man who fully understands the love of Christ for him (love that is faithful, gracious, sacrificial, supportive, etc.) will have both a motivation and model by which to love his wife. This is how the husband is to love.

So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself; for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also *does* the church, because we are members of His body. **FOR THIS REASON A MAN SHALL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER AND SHALL BE JOINED TO HIS WIFE, AND THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH.** This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church. Nevertheless, each individual among you also is to

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love his own wife even as himself, and the wife must *see to it* that she respects her husband. (Eph. 5:28-33)

Marital unity is similar to the unity that occurs within the body of Christ. Though we are many, with individual gifts and roles (Rom. 12:4-8), there is only one body, the church (Rom. 12:4-5; 1 Cor. 12:13; Gal. 3:28; Eph. 4:4). In Christian marriage, personal identity, giftedness, and role distinctions are maintained, yet the couple is one in Christ, serving God as a unit. Marital teamwork requires humility, learning, and obedience to God. The husband, who at one time was under the authority of his parents, leaves that authority when he marries his wife, and commits himself to her.

According to the New Testament, then, the husband is to function as the head of the wife, to love his wife and cherish her as Christ loved the Church. So also, the wife is to reverence her husband and be obedient to his wishes. There will be little difficulty about the wife so adjusting herself to her own husband if he is carrying out the instructions for him by loving her as Christ loved the Church.⁴

In summary, the Christian husband is to submit to Christ (1 Cor. 11:3), and love his wife as Christ loves the church, providing, protecting, and guiding her into the will of God (Eph. 5:25). The wife is to voluntarily submit to the

⁴ Lewis S. Chafer, "Marriage" in *Systematic Theology*, Vol. 7 (Grand Rapids, Mich., Kregel Publications, 1997), 234.

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husband's loving leadership and to respect him as he fulfills his loving duties (Eph. 5:22-24, 33). Respect means lifting the husband up in an honorable way, in words and actions, both privately and publicly.

Walking with God

Chapter 3

Walking with God¹

The Christian vows taken at marriage are only as strong as the person who makes them. We are able to keep our commitment because God helps us. He strengthens us and guides us to a life of Christian maturity where words are backed by Christian integrity. Such a life does not come easy, but it's the best life to have. Developing Christian integrity takes time, as we learn and live God's Word on a regular basis, viewing difficulties and trials as opportunities to grow (Jam. 1:2-4). As we grow spiritually, we learn what it means to be filled with the Spirit (Eph. 5:18), to walk in the Spirit (Gal. 5:16), to manifest the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23), to avoid grieving or quenching the Holy Spirit (Eph. 4:30; 1 Thess. 5:19), and to restore fellowship after we've sinned against God (1 John 1:5-10). The Christian marriage reaches optimal conditions that are sustained when both believers learn to walk with God on a regular basis.

Walking with God starts with a relationship. At the moment of faith in Christ, the believer is made spiritually alive (John 1:12-13; 1 Pet. 1:3, 22-23), given a new nature (2 Cor. 5:17; Eph. 4:24), blessed with eternal life (John 3:16; 10:28), and imputed with God's own righteousness (2 Cor. 5:21; Phil. 3:9). By faith we consider ourselves strangers to the only world we've ever known (1 Pet. 2:11), and citizens

¹ Sections of this chapter are taken from my book, *The Christian Life: A Study of Biblical Spirituality*.

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of the heavenly kingdom we've yet to enter (Phil. 3:20-21). God Himself equips us with knowledge and power to do His will (2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Pet. 1:2-3), but there are spiritual forces and worldly systems set against us to keep us from our calling and destiny (Eph. 6:12-13). For this reason, it is important to stay close to God and maintain our walk with Him; knowing "the nearness of God is my good" (Ps. 73:28).

To walk with God is the ideal standard for a believer (Lev. 26:3-12; Gal. 5:16, 25; Eph. 4:1-3; Col. 2:6-7; cf. Rev. 3:4). It does not mean a life of sinless perfection; rather, it means we handle our sin in a biblical manner with humility and confession (e.g. 2 Sam. 12:1-23; cf. 1 Kings 11:4; 1 John 1:8-10). Walking with God means we go in the same direction He is going, and like a friend, we are glad to share in His fellowship (1 John 1:1-10). It means God is regularly in our thoughts, and that we live every day conscious of Him and His will for our lives (Rom. 12:1-2; Col. 3:16-17). Walking with God means we are open and honest with Him about everything and agree to let His light shine in our lives, not fearing what it exposes (1 John 1:5-7). It means being sensitive to what may offend Him, and making every effort to please Him through a life of faith (2 Cor. 5:9; Heb. 11:6).

We walk with God when He is in all our thoughts; not because we consciously think of Him at all times, but because He is naturally suggested to us by all we think of; as when any person or plan or idea has become important to us, no matter what we think of, our thought is always found recurring to this favorite object, so with the godly man everything has a connection with God and must be ruled by that

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connection. When some change in his circumstances is thought of, he has first of all to determine how the proposed change will affect his connection with God—will his conscience be equally clear, will he be able to live on the same friendly terms with God and so forth. When he falls into sin he cannot rest till he has resumed his place at God’s side and walks again with Him. This is the general nature of walking with God; it is a persistent endeavor to hold all our life open to God’s inspection and in conformity to His will; a readiness to give up what we find does cause any misunderstanding between us and God; a feeling of loneliness if we have not some satisfaction in our efforts at holding fellowship with God, a cold and desolate feeling when we are conscious of doing something that displeases Him. This walking with God necessarily tells on the whole life and character.²

Walking with God is paramount to producing a godly life and a good marriage. “The word *walk* implies a steady, progressive relationship and not just a casual acquaintance. To walk with God is the business of a lifetime, and not just the performance of an hour.”³

² Marcus Dods, *The Book of Genesis* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1893), 51-53.

³ William MacDonald, *Believer’s Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments*, ed. Arthur Farstad (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1995), 38.

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Do not grieve or quench the Holy Spirit

God the Holy Spirit dwells within us from the moment of salvation until we leave this world and go to heaven (1 Cor. 6:19-20). The Christian who walks with God is given two negative commands concerning his walk with the Spirit. The first is “Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption” (Eph. 4:30), and the second is “Do not quench the Spirit” (1 Thess. 5:19).

The Holy Spirit guides us to holy living and He is grieved whenever we sin and act contrary to His guidance. “Accordingly, when the Christian is exhorted to “grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, in whom ye were sealed unto the day of redemption” (Eph. 4:30), it is an appeal to allow nothing in his life contrary to the holiness of the Spirit.”⁴ It is our personal sin that grieves the Holy Spirit, and “where sin is tolerated in the believer’s daily life, the Spirit, who indwells him, must then turn from His blessed ministry *through* him, to a pleading ministry *to* him.”⁵

The fact that the Spirit of God has been grieved may be readily determined in the Christian’s experience. There is a loss of fellowship with God and the fruit of the Spirit, and some of the spiritual darkness that engulfs the unsaved descends upon the

⁴ John F. Walvoord, *The Holy Spirit* (Grand Rapids, MI., Zondervan Publishing, 1977), 200.

⁵ Lewis S. Chafer, *He that is Spiritual* (Grand Rapids, Mich. Zondervan Publishing, 1967), 70.

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consciousness. For this reason Christians who have grieved the Holy Spirit may appear outwardly to be living on the same plane of experience as the unsaved.⁶

The Holy Spirit calls us to walk according to Scripture, and His ministry is quenched when we resist His guidance. The word “quench” carries the idea of dowsing water on a fire. The picture is that we suppress what the Holy Spirit seeks to accomplish in our lives. “It is evident that refusal to submit to the Word of God is quenching the Spirit, making the fullness of the Spirit impossible.”⁷ So what do we do if we’ve grieved and/or quenched the Holy Spirit? The answer is found in God’s grace who has supplied a means of restoring fellowship with Him through confession of personal sin.

Confess sins regularly

Sin is failure to do God’s will. No Christian is ever free from sin in this life, “Indeed, there is not a righteous man on earth who *continually* does good and who never sins” (Eccl. 7:20). What person can say, “I have cleansed my heart, I am pure from my sin”? (Prov. 20:9). Acts of sin do not jeopardize our eternal salvation which was secured by the Lord Jesus Christ (John 10:28), but it does hurt our walk with the Lord (1 John 1:5-10), and stifles the work of the Holy Spirit who dwells within us (1 Cor. 3:16; Eph. 4:30; 1 Thess. 5:19). Though we sin against God, our eternal

⁶ John F. Walvoord, *The Holy Spirit*, 200.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 198.

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security and righteous standing before Him is never jeopardized. We are eternally secure (John 10:28), and keep on possessing the righteousness of God that was imputed to us at the moment of salvation (Rom. 4:1-5; 2 Cor. 5:21; Phil. 3:9). There is never condemnation for the Christian who sins (Rom. 8:1). When we sin, as Christians, we break fellowship with God and stifle the work of the Holy Spirit who dwells within us (1 John 1:5-6; Eph. 4:30; 1 Thess. 5:19). If we continue in sin, or leave sin unconfessed, we are in real danger of divine discipline from God (Ps. 32:1-4; Heb. 12:5-11; 1 John 5:16-17; cf. Dan. 4:37). If we confess our sin directly to God, He will immediately forgive our sin and restore us to fellowship (1 John 1:9; cf. Ps. 32:5). God is faithful and just to forgive our sins every time we confess them because of the atoning work of Christ who shed His blood on the cross for us (1 John 1:9; 2:1-2).

The forgiveness John speaks about here [i.e. 1 John 1:9] is parental, not judicial. Judicial forgiveness means forgiveness from the penalty of sins, which the sinner receives when he believes on the Lord Jesus Christ. It is called judicial because it is granted by God acting as Judge. But what about sins which a person commits after conversion? As far as the penalty is concerned, the price has already been paid by the Lord Jesus on the cross of Calvary. But as far as fellowship in the family of God is concerned, the sinning saint needs parental forgiveness, that is, the forgiveness of His Father. He obtains it by confessing his sin. We need judicial forgiveness only once; that takes care of the penalty of all our sins—past, present, and future. But we need parental

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forgiveness throughout our Christian life.⁸

Be filled with the Spirit

And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father. (Eph. 5:18-20)

The Spirit-filled Christian enjoys life and celebrates the many wonders of God's creation and takes pleasure in things such a walk in the woods, a baby's smile, a beautiful sunset, a satisfying meal and good friends. The spiritual Christian always keeps the Creator and creation distinct in his thinking, worshipping the former while enjoying the latter. Worldliness, however, is a mindset that perverts the enjoyment of the creation by calling men to use it in ways God never intended. The worldly minded person, whether Christian or not, uses the creation for selfish and destructive ends, and at times will even worship it

To be filled with the Spirit is to have the Spirit fulfilling in us all that God intended Him to do when he placed Him there. To be filled is not the problem of getting *more* of the Spirit: it is rather the problem of the Spirit getting *more* of us. We shall never have

⁸ William MacDonald, *Believer's Bible Commentary*, 2310-11.

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more of the Spirit than the anointing which every true Christian has received. On the other hand, the Spirit may have all of the believer and thus be able to manifest in him the life and character of Christ. A spiritual person, then, is one who experiences the divine purpose and plan in his daily life through the power of the indwelling Spirit. The *character* of that life will be the out-lived Christ. The cause of that life will be the unhindered indwelling Spirit (Eph. 3:16-21; 2 Cor. 3:18).⁹

Grow to spiritual maturity

Being filled with the Holy Spirit means He is fulfilling in us all He desires. But we should understand that God always works through His Word, the Bible, to transform our thinking so that it aligns with His thinking. Once we begin to think the way God thinks, we can then begin to act as He would have us act, and our words and actions will reflect His character and glory. This has magnificent expression in the Christian couple who walk together in God's will, as they advance toward spiritual maturity and a life of Christian integrity.

The Spirit of God uses the Word of God to work in our lives...when you are controlled by the Word of God, you are filled with the Spirit of God. Not only husbands and wives, but all Christians need to spend time daily letting the Word of Christ dwell in them richly, for then the Spirit of God can work in our lives

⁹ Lewis S. Chafer, *He that is Spiritual*, 43-44.

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to make us joyful, thankful, and submissive. And this means heaven in the home—or wherever God may put us.¹⁰

¹⁰ Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), Eph. 5:25–33.

Make Wise Choices

Chapter 4

*Make Wise Choices*¹

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom,
and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.
(Prov. 9:10)

A vibrant and healthy Christian marriage is never the product of chance, but of good choices rooted in the wisdom of God's Word. The Bible, especially Proverbs, contrasts the wise man with the fool. According to Scripture, wisdom (Heb. *hokmah*, Grk. *sophos*) is the instruction necessary for making choices in conformity with God's Word. The wise man "will hear and increase in learning, and a man of understanding will acquire wise counsel" (Prov. 1:5; cf. 2:5); however, "fools despise wisdom and instruction. (Prov. 1:7b). Biblical wisdom is helpful for all of life, and the Christian couple will need all they can acquire so their marriage will be blessed. Wise choices demand biblical understanding. To ignore God's wisdom is to bring unnecessary trouble to oneself. Wisdom leads us to walk in righteousness (Hos. 14:9), to turn away from evil (Prov. 3:7; 14:16), to engage in good deeds done in gentleness (Jam. 3:13), to control our anger (Prov. 29:11), and to seek the company of wise companions (Prov. 13:20; 15:31). The fool despises and rejects God's wisdom (Prov. 1:7; 23:9), and

¹ Portions of this chapter are taken from my book, *The Christian Life: A Study of Biblical Spirituality*.

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accepts and lives by worldly/demonic wisdom (Ex. 7:11; Col. 2:23; Jam. 3:13-17). The fool does not please God.

The Christian must be on guard against worldly wisdom set against God and His Word. Worldly wisdom finds its ultimate source in Satan (Jam. 3:15-17). The fool rejects the wisdom of God which leads to salvation and moral uprightness. The fool can be educated or uneducated, rich or poor, white or black, old or young, male or female. He is friendly toward the world and its philosophies and values that promote human wisdom and accomplishments. “A fool is not necessarily one who is marked by a low IQ but one who leaves God out of his consciousness.”² The fool excludes God from having any say over his thoughts and actions.

The word [fool] is used in Scripture with respect to *moral* more than to intellectual deficiencies. The “fool” is not so much one lacking in mental powers, as one who misuses them; not one who does not reason, but reasons wrongly. In Scripture the “fool” primarily is the person who casts off the fear of God and thinks and acts as if he could safely disregard the eternal principles of God’s righteousness (Ps. 14:1; Prov. 14:9; Jer. 17:11; etc.).³

² J. Dwight Pentecost, *Designed to Be Like Him* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2001), 55.

³ Merrill Frederick Unger, R. K. Harrison, Howard Frederic Vos et al., “Fool”, *The New Unger’s Bible Dictionary*, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1988), 437-438

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The purpose of wisdom is to know God, and knowing God means conforming our thoughts and actions to His character. God gives wisdom so we can do His will. Examples of God-given wisdom include:

1. **Artistic wisdom:** The ability to create works of art that reflect and glorify God (Ex. 28:3; 31:2-5; 1 Kings 7:14).
2. **Academic wisdom:** The ability to learn and write about God's world (e.g. zoology, biology, botany, etc., 1 Kings 4:29-34).
3. **Judicial wisdom:** The ability to decide legal matters for God's people (e.g. Judges, Solomon, etc. 1 Kings 16:28).
4. **Military wisdom:** The ability to defeat God's enemies (e.g. Joshua, David; Prov. 20:18; 21:22; 24:6).
5. **Governing wisdom:** The ability to lead God's people into His will (e.g. Joseph, Moses, Nehemiah, Church Elders, etc.).
6. **Serving wisdom:** The ability to meet the needs of others, spiritually and materially (e.g. Deacons, Acts 6:3).
7. **Teaching wisdom:** The ability to learn and clearly communicate God's Word (e.g. Moses, Paul, etc., Col. 1:9).
8. **Spiritual wisdom:** The ability to live God's will in accordance with His Word (Matt. 7:24-27).

In men wisdom is not only practical understanding of matters relating to this life (1 Kings 3:12), but in the highest sense it is the theoretical and practical acceptance of divine revelation. Wisdom is in the

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deepest sense a divine gift (*see* Acts 6:10; 1 Cor. 2:6; 12:8; Eph. 1:17; Col. 1:9; 3:16; Jam. 1:5; 3:15–17).⁴

There is marital wisdom in Scripture; that is, the knowledge necessary for both the husband and wife to think and live as God directs. Believers who learn and walk in God’s wisdom will be blessed in the marriage.

Choose a Christian Spouse

The first act of marital wisdom involves choosing a Christian spouse. Believers are to marry another who is “in the Lord” (1 Cor. 7:39). Paul, addressing Christian fellowship, commanded “do not be bound together with unbelievers” (2 Cor. 6:14).⁵ The Christian should never knowingly marry an unbeliever, for this would join someone who is spiritually alive with someone who is spiritually dead. The unbeliever cannot be spiritual or live in God’s will, for that person resides in a perpetual state of spiritual death until they turn to Christ for salvation (Eph. 2:1-5; Col. 1:13-14). The Christian who knowingly marries an unbeliever is asking for trouble. It’s better to obey the Lord and marry a growing believer so blessing can come.

⁴ Merrill Frederick Unger, “Wisdom” in *The New Unger’s Bible Dictionary*, 1369.

⁵ Paul was not addressing Christian marriage within the context of 2 Corinthians 6:14, but was commanding Christians in the church not to be united with false teachers. However, if one should not be bound together with an unbeliever in the church, how much more does that hold true for Christian marriage?!

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When two Christians enter into marriage, they can begin the journey toward a spiritual walk with God. The Christian man and woman must each look to God and His Word for spiritual growth, and it is normal that one will advance beyond the other. This is okay, as long as there is advance, and the couple shows love and patience with each other.

The Christian couple must guard against worldly standards of marriage. The world often promotes a happy marriage, but God promotes a biblical marriage. There's a difference. A biblical marriage is one that conforms to God's Word. I've seen happy marriages that were not biblical, as the husband and wife lived in sin, defying God's Word in every way. By worldly standards their marriage was a success, but biblically, it was a complete failure because God was given little or no place in their relationship. I've also seen biblical marriages where both Christians struggled against the pressures of the world, yet they had a peace and joy that transcended their circumstances, because they trusted in the Lord and looked to Him in everything (Phil. 4:6-11). I believe it is true that virtue is its own reward, and Christians are happiest when they stay on course with God.

Choose Righteous Friends

The Christian couple should choose wisely when it comes to personal friends. God created us to have relationships; however, believers should be wise regarding who they associate with, as "bad associations corrupts good morals" (1 Cor. 15:33). Close relationships should be

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developed over time, as we get to know others, hearing their words and watching their ways, and feeling confident they are among the faithful righteous (Ps. 26:1-5; 101:1-8; Rom. 16:17-18; 1 Cor. 5:9-13; 15:33; 2 Cor. 6:14-17; 2 Thess. 3:14-15). A righteous person will surrender to God's will (Jam. 4:7; cf. Rom. 12:1-2), seek God's glory (1 Cor. 10:31), display God's love (1 Cor. 13:4-8; 1 John 3:23), speak God's truth (Eph. 4:15, 25), show humility (Eph. 4:1-2), be forgiving (Matt. 18:21-22), encourage others to do good works (Heb. 10:24), seek the fellowship of other Christians (Heb. 10:25), pray for others (2 Thess. 1:11), build others up in the Lord (1 Thess. 5:11), be devoted to fellow Christians (Rom. 12:10), and live by faith (2 Cor. 5:7). You will be blessed by choosing Christian friends who love the Lord and seek His will above all else.

As we read through Scripture, we learn there are some people God wants us to avoid. This is because some relationships are harmful to our walk with God. Scripture prohibits **intimate** relationships with two groups of people:

1. Unbelievers (2 Cor. 6:14-15; 2 Tim. 3:1-5; Rom. 16:17-18; 2 John 1:9-11).
2. Believers who have turned away from God and are living perpetually carnal/worldly lives (1 Cor. 5:1-2, 9-11; 2 Thess. 3:6; Tit. 3:10-11).

As a Christian, we will be in regular contact with unbelievers, and though we pray for them and share Christ when given the opportunity, we must never enter into an **intimate** relationship with them. This is also true concerning our relationship with other Christians who choose to live like the world. Living in a fallen world means

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the Christian must live in the reality that there are dangers and dangerous people to be avoided. Discernment is necessary at all times. God's Word provides the righteous standard that helps determine those who are safe from those who might cause spiritual harm. As Christians, we love intimate fellowship and unity with others, but only within the context of holiness and obedience to God's Word.

The Apostle Paul wrote to his friend Timothy and mentioned the "last days" as a time in which unbelieving sinful men would magnify their ways (2 Tim. 3:1-5). After providing a list of the character flaws of these sinful men, Paul made no hesitation to tell his friend Timothy to "avoid such men as these." Paul described these men to Timothy, saying:

For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; avoid such men as these. (2 Tim. 3:2-5)

I personally dislike "malicious gossips" and am glad to "avoid" the rest as well. Though Paul's character list is primarily negative, we should not miss his statement that many are religious, "holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power" (2 Tim. 3:5). Among the lost there are both moral and immoral degenerates. The Christian has a responsibility to turn away and "avoid" men who live such sinful lives. Not that we stand in judgment of

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them as individuals, for that would be wrong! But we do evaluate their behavior as wrong, and on that basis, we avoid them because we do not want their behavior to harm us or corrupt our walk with the Lord. It is impossible for a humble believer who is seeking God's will through Scripture to have a relationship with an arrogant believer who is bent on opposing God and His Word.

Choose a Good Church

Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful; and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging *one another*; and all the more as you see the day drawing near. (Heb. 10:23-25)

For the Christian couple, choosing a good Bible church is not simply for fellowship, but for prayer, worship, and above all, learning Scripture. We learn how to pray because the Bible teaches us. We learn good Christian fellowship because the Bible reveals what good Christian fellowship really is. We learn to worship because the Bible teaches us what genuine worship ought to be. The Bible alone provides the necessary information to live the Christian life, and if we close its pages, we know nothing. What we think about God comes from what He has revealed about Himself in Scripture. A good Bible church will place a priority on learning the Bible, because Scripture alone provides the necessary information that makes the other activities meaningful. Without a biblical basis, the church is just another social club.

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A person becomes a member of the church—the body of Christ—when he believes in Jesus for salvation (Gal. 3:26-28; Eph. 1:22-23). The church was not known in the Old Testament but was revealed to the apostles in the New Testament (Eph. 3:1-12; 5:32; Col. 1:25-27). Local churches consisted of Christians who gathered together for biblical teaching, fellowship, the Lord’s Supper and prayer (1 Cor. 1:2; Col. 1:2; Rev. 2-3), which met in people’s homes.

The churches of Asia greet you. Aquila and Prisca greet you heartily in the Lord, with the church that is in their house. (1 Cor. 16:19)

Greet the brethren who are in Laodicea and also Nympha and the church that is in her house. (Col. 4:15-16)

Biblically the church is ALWAYS an assembly of believers and NEVER a building! Too often we say “we’re going to church” as though the church is located down the street. A more correct way would be to say “the church meets” at such and such a location. You can change the location, but the church, as the body of Christ, always consists of Christians who assemble for biblical teaching, fellowship, the Lord’s Supper and prayer.

They [the first local church] were continually devoting themselves to the apostles’ teaching [divine instruction] and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread [Lord’s Supper] and to prayer. (Acts 2:42)

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Biblically, the church's emphasis should always be on: 1) learning Scripture, 2) having quality fellowship, 3) partaking of the Lord's Supper, and 4) praying together. Certainly there can be other activities, but these four **MUST** be present and prioritized in every church. Scripture never puts an emphasis on the quantity of members or the attractiveness of the facilities. Don't get me wrong; I enjoy a clean facility and I am not against numbers, I just don't measure a church by those things. Mormons have large congregations that meet in beautiful facilities; yet they're spiritually dead because they've trusted in a false savior, having been led astray by a false prophet named Joseph Smith (Gal. 1:8-9).

It is a real blessing to get into a Bible church where the pastor teaches Scripture verse by verse, paying attention to the original languages of Hebrew and Greek when necessary, explaining the history and culture behind the text, and always giving the plain sense of the passage as the biblical author intended it for his original audience. A good pastor will bridge the language and historical gap, communicating the text in freshness with conviction. Some characteristics of a good Bible church include:

1. Expository Bible teaching (Eph. 4:11-16).
2. Love for one another (1 Thess. 3:11-12; 4:9; 1 Pet. 4:8; 1 John 3:11, 23; 4:7, 11).
3. Willingness to meet the needs of others (Phil. 2:3-4).
4. Encouraging one another (1 Thess. 5:11).
5. Edifying one another (Rom. 15:1-2; Eph. 4:29).
6. Serving one another (Gal. 5:13).
7. Being kind and forgiving one another (Eph. 4:32).

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There are no perfect churches but there are mature ones in which growing believers place an emphasis on learning Scripture, showing love and grace, and striving to glorify God in all they do. The growing church looks upward to God in faith, outward to others with the gospel, and inward to Christians with love (Col. 3:1-17). The joy of good Christian fellowship is rewarding in so many ways as the growing believer benefits from, and adds to the spiritual prosperity of a church.

Develop a Biblical Worldview

Making good choices as a Christian couple means living in the biblical worldview. This means thinking from the biblical perspective and seeing life from the divine perspective. In one sense, it means learning to see all of life as special, coming from the hand of God and having purpose because God created it so. In another sense, it means seeing man and the world as fallen because of sin, needing God, needing salvation. The Christian who lives with a biblical worldview sees both beauty and evil in the world.

The Bible gives us a basis for our basic presuppositions about life such as the origins of the universe, mankind, evil, etc. Scripture addresses the important things in life such as God, family, work, economics, science, and even politics. The Bible is absolutely reliable when considering things such as history, archeology and geography. The Word of God does not speak on every issue, but what it does address is true and reliable.

Too often Christians compartmentalize Scripture, allowing God to speak to certain areas of their lives while

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excluding His Word from other areas. Some Christians do this intentionally because they do not want God to have complete control of their lives, so they shut Him out of some areas. Other Christians have been influenced to compartmentalize God in their thinking by liberal teachers who teach that the Bible speaks only to things religious, other-worldly, or existential, and that Christians should never mix Scripture with academic pursuits such as history, science, economics, etc.⁶ Compartmentalizing God is a facet of worldliness and is just another way of excluding Him from having say over our lives. Thinking biblically means thinking in an integrated way, with the Bible at the center of our thoughts, guiding us and giving meaning to the data that comes through our senses. For example, I have a little dog, a Havanese named Ari. All her creaturely behavior as a dog is natural to her, since it is built into her by divine design. I see her from the biblical perspective, as a part of God's creation, having purpose because God created her to be what she is.

The Bible teaches that God created mankind in His image, to think, feel, and act as He does (Gen. 1:26-27). As God's unique creatures we find ourselves naturally bent toward art, music, literature, philosophy, science, mathematics, architecture, and other activities that enrich the soul and glorify Him. Mankind is God's special creation, unique in the universe. The Christian can engage in art and science to the glory of God, as this is consistent with Scripture. As Christians living in God's world, and

⁶ Francis Schaeffer explains this in detail in his book *The God Who is There*.

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understanding what the Scripture teaches about His creation, we are able to make sense of the world around us and enjoy the creation as God intended. Knowing Scripture also allows us to understand and reject the sinful perversions of the arts and sciences that fallen men have corrupted. Without God and Scripture to guide and give man purpose, man's uniqueness is lost in the universe, as he is ultimately of no greater value than what he paints on the canvass or studies under the microscope. Biblical thinkers know this to be true; because if there is no God and man is not unique (as the Bible teaches), then he is of no greater value than the tree, the rock, or the worm on a hook. If there is no God, then man is merely a biological accident.

For the atheist, man is nothing more than a molecular accident in a material universe. There is no reason for his existence and no given purpose for his life. His thoughts, feelings, and actions are simply electrochemical impulses that occur in the body and brain, and when man dies, those impulses cease. For the Christian who lives in the biblical worldview, all men have value because they are specially made in the image of God. Men paint, learn, sing, write, and study the world around them because they are unique creatures designed to behave this way, though their sinful natures have perverted the original order of things.

The Bible portrays God as creating an open universe in which He continually operates in every detail, working in every aspect of men's lives and calling them to salvation and a walk with Him. To develop a fully integrated biblical worldview, the Christian must have a healthy respect for God and His Word (Prov. 1:7), and surrender every area of his life to Christ as the "King of kings and Lord of lords"

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(Rev. 19:16). The Christian worldview is one that sees everything from the biblical perspective and under the authority and control of God. It's not enough to have right thinking, as we must also engage in right living, and this means submission to God. A fully integrated biblical worldview understands:

1. God exists as a Trinity: *God the Father* (Matt. 6:9), *God the Son* (John 1:1, 14 Matt. 16:16), and *God the Holy Spirit* (Acts 5:3-4). The Persons of the Trinity are co-eternal, co-infinite, and co-equal. Though they have differing roles in how they relate to each other and the creation, they are equal in essence and share the same attributes.⁷
2. God is perfectly holy in character (Ps. 99:9) and all His actions are good (Gen. 1:10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31).
3. God created the universe in six literal days (Gen. 1-2; Ex. 20:8-11).
4. Evil came into existence when Lucifer—an angel—rebelled against God (Isa. 14:12-14; Ezek. 28:12-18).

⁷ Scripture teaches God is *omniscient* (Ps. 139:1-6; Matt. 6:31-33), *omnipresent* (Ps. 139:7-12; Heb. 13:5), *omnipotent* (Job 42:2; Isa. 40:28-29), *sovereign* (1 Chron. 29:11; Dan. 4:35; Acts 17:24-25), *righteous* (Ps. 11:7; 119:137), *just* (Ps. 9:7-8; 19:9; 50:6; 58:11), *holy* (Ps. 99:9), *immutable* (Ps. 102:26, 27; Mal. 3:6), *truthful* (2 Sam. 7:28; John 17:17; 1 John 5:20), *loving* (Jer. 31:3; 1 John 4:7-12, 16), *faithful* (Deut. 7:9; Lam. 3:23; 1 John 1:9), *merciful* (Ps. 86:15; Luke 6:36; Tit. 3:5), *gracious* (Ps. 111:4; 116:5; 1 Pet. 5:10), and *eternal* (Deut. 33:27; 1 Tim. 1:17).

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5. God created mankind in His own image, to think, feel, act and have a relationship with God (Gen. 1:26-27).
6. Adam sinned when he followed Satan in rebellion against God (Gen. 3:1-7).
7. The entire human race is fallen *in Adam*, spiritually dead, and unable to correct the problem of total depravity (Rom. 3:23; 5:6-12; 1 Cor. 15:21-22).
8. God the Son took upon Himself true humanity (Gen. 3:15; John 1:1, 14), born of a virgin (Isa. 7:14; Matt. 1:18-25), in the line of Abraham and David (Matt. 1:1), born King of the Jews (Matt. 2:2), lived righteously according to the Mosaic Law (Matt. 5:17-19; Gal. 4:4), never sinned (Heb. 4:15), died on a cross in the place of sinners (Mark 10:45; Rom. 5:8), was buried and rose to life on the third day (1 Cor. 15:3-4), and ascended to heaven where He is currently interceding for the saints (Acts 1:10-11; Rom. 8:34).
9. God alone has solved the sin problem through the substitutionary death of Jesus who died in the place of sinful mankind (Isa. 53; John 3:16-18; 20:31; Acts 4:12; 16:30-31; Rom. 3:23-26; 5:6-10; 1 Cor. 15:3-4; 2 Cor. 5:17-21; Gal. 2:16; Eph. 2:8-9; Phil. 3:9; Col. 2:13-14; Tit. 3:5; Heb. 2:9; 1 John 2:2; 4:10).
10. Salvation is a gracious and free gift to all who will accept it by faith alone in Christ alone (John 3:16; 1 Cor. 15:3-4; Gal. 2:16; Eph. 2:8-9; Phil. 3:9; Tit. 3:5).
11. Jesus Christ is returning again to rule the earth (Rev. 19:11-16; 20:1-6).
12. Evil will come to an end in the eternal state (Rev. 20:10-15; 21-22).

Make Wise Choices

Developing a biblical worldview means studying Scripture with a conscious mindset toward understanding the world, people, and history through the biblical lens. It starts with an understanding of God and His character, then moves to an understanding of His creation, the origin of mankind, the beginning of sin, an understanding of Israel, the advent of the Savior, the necessity of the cross, salvation by grace alone, the coming of the Holy Spirit, an understanding of the church, the rapture, the second coming of Jesus, the millennial reign of Christ, the end of evil, the eternal state, and other important doctrines.⁸

⁸ Charlie Clough's *Biblical Framework* series is recommended: <http://www.bibleframework.com>

Develop Good Habits

Chapter 5

Develop Good Habits

“As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD”
(Josh. 24:15)

Habits start with choices, which we repeat over and over, until they become routine behavior. We all develop habits throughout our lifetime—some are helpful and some are harmful. We develop habits in our thinking, in our speech, and in our behavior. Good habits strengthen a marriage and have practical application in all areas of life.

As Christians, my wife and I wanted our marriage to be based on Christian values, derived from Scripture, knowing this would make a strong foundation. Our values inform us what is right and what is wrong and guide our behavior in almost everything (i.e. marriage, family, friends, work, society, politics, etc.). We wanted our Christian values to be deeply ingrained and to produce quick and habitual responses. We knew this would take time and discipline, so we spent many hours reading our Bibles, studying and talking about Scripture, or listening to expositional Bible lessons while sitting around the house or driving in the car. We’ve had our times of failure over the years, and those times can be traced back to poor choices where we let worldly values influence our thinking and behavior. We’ve had to be diligent with the use of our time so that our good choices became good habits, ones that make us quick to seek God, to value integrity, to love others, to show grace, to give thanks, to forgive, and to pray (just to

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name a few). The practices in this chapter are by no means exhaustive, and perhaps you can develop many good habits of your own. Below is a list of values and practices we've sought to live by.

Seek God's glory

“Not to us, O LORD, not to us, but to Your name give glory because of Your lovingkindness, because of Your truth” (Ps. 115:1). Marriage is not an end in itself, but fits within the larger purpose of the Christian life, which is to glorify God (Ps. 115:1; 1 Cor. 10:31). The Christian marriage that glorifies God is modeled after Christ and the church (Eph. 5:22-33). Marriage is not about happiness, or good health, or getting rich, or having a good time. Marriage is about glorifying God. What's interesting is that when a couple seeks to glorify God, they generally will be happy and live a very satisfying life. Not because God blesses them with good health and all the world's resources. In fact, most believers around the planet live in poverty all their lives and many struggle with sickness and social problems. Many face persecution and even martyrdom. Christians who seek to glorify God generally live happy lives because God blesses their marriage on a level that transcends the physical and material. Even though the Christian couple may struggle with problems in this world, they can have great inner peace and joy because of their relationship with God and their daily walk with Him based on His Word (Isa. 26:3-4; Matt. 6:31-34; Phil. 4:11-14). The primary purpose of God's children is to bring Him glory (Rom. 11:36; 16:27; 1 Cor. 10:31; Eph. 1:4-6, 11-14).

There can be no higher goal. There can be no higher

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ambition. There can be no higher purpose than that which the Word of God puts before us as the chief end of the child of God, to glorify God. The greatest goal in the believer's life is not his own enjoyment of his salvation. His highest goal is not learning the truths of Scripture, nor even teaching and preaching the Word. His greatest goal is to live Jesus Christ so that men may know the Father.¹

Make time for Bible study

“Like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation” (1 Pet. 2:2; cf. 2 Tim. 2:15; 2 Pet. 3:18). Procrastination is the thief of time and opportunity, and the longer we delay in learning God's Word, the longer it will take us to grow up spiritually and enjoy the blessings He has for us. Learning God's Word is paramount for a healthy marriage as each believer advances toward spiritual maturity. We cannot live what we do not know, and learning God's Word necessarily precedes living His will. “All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work” (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

¹ J. Dwight Pentecost, *Designed to Be Like Him: Understanding God's Plan for Fellowship, Conduct, Conflict, and Maturity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2001), 196.

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Realize your identity in Christ

Christian values are intimately connected with our identity; that is, where we came from, who we are, and where we're going. Before our salvation, we were said to be *in Adam* (Rom. 5:12; 1 Cor. 15:21-22), dead in our sins (Eph. 2:1-3), helpless to save ourselves (Rom. 5:6-10), and destined for eternal wrath (John 3:36). But God, because of His mercy and grace (Eph. 2:4-9), made us alive *in Christ* (Eph. 2:5; 1 Pet. 1:3), forgave all our sins (Eph. 1:7), and blessed us with the gifts of eternal life and righteousness (John 10:28; 2 Cor. 5:21; Phil. 3:9). Because of God's goodness, we are forever identified as being in union with Christ and judicially declared righteous (1 Cor. 1:30; 6:11; 2 Cor. 5:17; Col. 3:3; Heb. 10:10, 14). As we grow spiritually, our identity in Christ dictates how we think and live, for we have been set apart by God for good purposes (Eph. 2:10). God, who judicially declares us righteous in His sight, also calls us to be *sanctified experientially* and to strive for holiness in our thoughts and behavior (Rom. 12:1-2; 1 Pet. 1:15-16). And, when we leave this world, we will be *sanctified eternally* when God calls us to our heavenly home (John 14:2; 1 Cor. 15:35-46; 2 Cor. 5:8; 1 Pet. 1:4-5).

Learn to trust God

“Trust in the LORD with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight” (Prov. 3:5-6). God promises to meet our needs wherever we are, either spiritual or physical (Phil. 4:19). Sometimes God sends us blessing that we might enjoy the things of this world. However, because God is more concerned with our

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Christian character than with our creaturely comforts, He will sometimes cause us to experience trials that help grow us spiritually (Rom. 5:3-5; Jam. 1:2-4). In all things, we should look to God and trust Him at His Word, knowing He is in control of our circumstances and is seeking our best interest. There are many Christian couples who bring unnecessary hardship upon themselves because they fail to trust God, but rather, put their trust in other people. “Cursed is the man who trusts in mankind and makes flesh his strength, and whose heart turns away from the LORD” (Jer. 17:5), but “blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD and whose trust is the LORD” (Jer. 17:7). We are called to a life of faith, where we trust God at His Word (1 Cor. 2:5; 2 Cor. 5:7; Heb. 10:38), realizing that His blessings come to us when we learn to trust Him, for “without faith it is impossible to please *Him*, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and *that* He is a rewarder of those who seek Him” (Heb. 11:6).

Choose wise friends²

“He who walks with wise men will be wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm” (Prov. 13:20). We are all susceptible to influence from others and the wise person chooses his friends carefully. Those who are guided by biblical wisdom demonstrate godly character (Ps. 1:1; 26:1-5; 101:1-8; Rom. 16:17-18; 1 Cor. 5:9-13; 2 Cor. 6:14-17; 2 Thess. 3:14-15). Godly friends are those whose thoughts, words and actions are rooted in Scripture, and who seek to glorify God and edify others spiritually. Bad friends

² See appendix A: *Biblical Facts about Wisdom*

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promote immorality and have a corrupting influence that draws us away from the Lord (1 Cor. 15:33). In our pursuit of holiness, we must make wise choices to associate with wise and godly friends.

Avoid foolish people³

“Leave the presence of a fool, or you will not discern words of knowledge” (Prov. 14:7). The fool is a fool by choice, not by accident. The fool makes no place for God in his thoughts or activities. If possible, avoid speaking and interacting with the fool. “Do not speak in the hearing of a fool, for he will despise the wisdom of your words” (Prov. 23:9). Some fools are beyond correction. “A rebuke goes deeper into one who has understanding than a hundred blows into a fool” (Prov. 17:10). “Though you pound a fool in a mortar with a pestle along with crushed grain, *yet* his foolishness will not depart from him” (Prov. 27:22).

Pray for each other

Praying for our spouse is helpful to healthy marriage. Praying for our spouse means we desire God’s best in their life. We thankfully come before God’s “throne of grace” (Heb. 4:16) and pray for physical, mental, and spiritual health for those we love. We “pray without ceasing” (1 Thess. 5:17) to the One who is able to meet all our needs and who helps us accomplish His will (Phil. 4:6-8). We pray for wisdom to know Him and courage to walk in His will. We pray that we will model Christ and show love, humility, and

³ See appendix B: *Biblical Facts about Fools*

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grace toward each other. Because we are finite, we do not always know how to pray, but thankfully, God the Holy Spirit and God the Son both pray for us (Rom. 8:26-27, 34).

Encourage one another

Our speech should be marked by love and encouraging words that build each other up in the Lord. “Therefore encourage one another and build up one another, just as you also are doing” (1 Thess. 5:10). “But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called ‘Today,’ so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin” (Heb. 3:13). Some men and women spend their time criticizing their spouses and running them down in public. This is very unattractive and hurts the relationship. Offer praise rather than criticism and do your best to build each other up, in private and in public.

Make it a habit to praise God

Praise and thanksgiving flow out of the Christian who is daily filled with the Holy Spirit (Eph. 5:18) and walking in dependence on Him (Gal. 5:16). When we are under the Spirit’s guidance, we will find ourselves “speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord” (Eph. 5:19). The Lord never tries to force praise from us. Forced praise is like forced love, it’s a contradiction in terms. We love and praise God for His lovingkindness and goodness.

The trials of life will, at times, challenge us to maintain a habit of praise. This is because we don’t feel like

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praising God in the midst of our suffering. There are times we praise God as a response to some good thing He's done, such as when He rescued the Israelites from Pharaoh, and Moses and Miriam sang and danced (Ex. 15:1-21). But there are times we praise God by faith, because we trust His love and goodness in spite of our trial and hardship. Job felt the pain and sorrow of losing his wealth and family, yet by faith he worshipped God and blessed His name (Job 1:20-21; cf. 13:15). Jeremiah too knew real suffering (Lam. 3:1-20), yet in the midst of his grief he praised God because of His lovingkindnesses, compassions, and faithfulness to His people (Lam. 3:21-23). By faith, Peter rejoiced after being whipped (Acts 5:40-41), and Paul and Silas sang hymns of praise after being beaten with rods and thrown into jail (Acts 16:22-25). This is because they knew they were in God's will, and they trusted in His goodness, despite their hardship. As God's children, we are to "rejoice always; pray without ceasing; [and] in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus" (1 Thess. 5:16-18).

Find time to rest and enjoy life

"One hand full of rest is better than two fists full of labor and striving after wind" (Eccl. 4:6). God's people should work hard and enjoy the fruit of their labor, but never at the cost of compromising righteousness (Ps. 37:16; Prov. 16:8), or of forfeiting time to rest and enjoy what God has given. "There is nothing better for a man than to eat and drink and tell himself that his labor is good. This also I have seen that it is from the hand of God. For who can eat and who can have enjoyment without Him?" (Eccl. 2:24-25). In the book of Ecclesiastes, Solomon identifies God's simple blessings to be the ability to enjoy *the labor of our hands*

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(Eccl. 2:24; 3:12-13; 5:19-20), *a good meal* (Eccl. 2:24; 8:15; 9:7-9), and *relationships with other people* (Eccl. 9:7-9). Solomon calls these blessings a “reward” and “gifts from God” (Eccl. 5:19-20; 9:9). Our time of play and relaxation should not be confused as being contrary to our daily spiritual walk with God.

How misleading is the theory that to be spiritual one must abandon play, diversion and helpful amusement! Such a conception of spirituality is born of a morbid human conscience. It is foreign to the Word of God...It is a serious thing to remove the element of relaxation and play from any life. We cannot be normal physically, mentally or spiritually if we neglect the vital factor in human life. God has provided that our joy shall be full.⁴

Develop a godly character

Character is the sum of who we are at the core of our being and is defined by a lifetime of behavior and not occasional failings. Many godly men have served the Lord well, yet sometimes fell into sin. Aaron led the Israelites in worshipping an idol (Ex. 32:1-6), and though this was a terrible sin, he moved beyond his failure to become the faithful high priest of Israel (Ex. 40:12-13; Lev. 8:6-12). David had an affair with Bathsheba and was instrumental in the murder of her husband Uriah (2 Sam. 11:1-21); but later he confessed his sin and was restored to fellowship with God

⁴ Lewis S. Chafer, *He that is Spiritual* (Grand Rapids, Mich. Zondervan Publishing, 1967), 60-61.

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(2 Sam. 12:13; Ps. 51:1-12), and resumed an active ministry in teaching others how to live godly lives (Ps. 51:13). God regarded David as “a man after His own heart” (1 Sam. 13:14). Peter denied the Lord three times in public (Matt. 26:34-35; 69-75), but was restored to fellowship and served God well throughout his life (John 21:15-19). The Apostle John was a faithful servant of Christ (Rev. 1:1-2), yet was twice rebuked for worshipping an angel (Rev. 19:10; 22:8-9). These are persons the Bible describes as godly men, though they occasionally fell into sin. Developing a godly character means learning those skills that make for a righteous life, both in private and in public. As Christians, we are to “pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance *and* gentleness” (1 Tim. 6:11), as this glorifies God and blesses us and others (cf. Phil. 4:8; Col. 3:12-15; 2 Pet. 1:5-8).

For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus, who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds. (Tit. 2:11-14)

Be teachable

Always be open to instruction. The wise man “will hear and increase in learning, and a man of understanding will acquire wise counsel” (Prov. 1:5; cf. 2:3-5); however, “fools despise wisdom and instruction. (Prov. 1:7b). “Do

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you see a man wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for him” (Prov. 26:11-12). “A fool does not delight in understanding, but only in revealing his own mind” (Prov. 18:2; cf. 14:9). Humility is the basis for teachability, as David writes, “He leads the humble in justice, and He teaches the humble His way” (Ps. 25:9). Make learning God’s wisdom your top priority. “The LORD gives wisdom; from His mouth *come* knowledge and understanding. He stores up sound wisdom for the upright; *He is* a shield to those who walk in integrity, guarding the paths of justice, and He preserves the way of His godly ones” (Prov. 2:6-8). Wisdom is a daily choice to learn and live God’s Word (Matt. 7:24-27).

Be a servant

“Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; do not *merely* look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others” (Phil. 2:3-4). Make choices to involve yourself in the lives of others, to help the helpless and needy, the widow and the orphan, and to give of your time and resources for their betterment. Model your life after Christ, who “did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45). Be kind and giving to others with no strings attached. Give because you choose to be gracious and don’t expect others to always be understanding or thankful.

Control your temper

“A fool always loses his temper, but a wise man

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holds it back” (Prov. 29:11; cf. 25:28). There is much injustice in life, so there’s always something to be angry about. Though you cannot control people or circumstances, don’t let yourself be controlled by them; rather, let God’s Word guide your attitude. A way to help control your anger is to avoid people given to anger, and associate with people of good character. “Do not associate with a man *given* to anger; or go with a hot-tempered man, or you will learn his ways and find a snare for yourself” (Prov. 22:24-25).

Develop gracious speech

“Let your speech always be with grace, *as though* seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should respond to each person” (Col. 4:6). “Words from the mouth of a wise man are gracious, while the lips of a fool consume him” (Eccl. 10:12). Gracious speech means we are thoughtful, kind, courteous and polite in the way we speak to others, even to those who are rude and offensive toward us. “Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such *a word* as is good for edification according to the need *of the moment*, so that it will give grace to those who hear” (Eph. 4:29).

Seek peace with others

Christians should seek peace and make peace when possible. “If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men” (Rom. 12:18). This means avoiding unnecessary conflicts that create strife. “Keeping away from strife is an honor for a man, but any fool will quarrel” (Prov. 20:3). Scripture informs us there is a place for standing one’s ground and fighting for what is right, even when it

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creates conflict (Acts 15:1-2; Gal. 2:4-5; cf. Matt. 23:1-36), and that there are times we should not quarrel with others when we don't have to. "The Lord's bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth" (2 Tim. 2:24-25).

Don't seek revenge when hurt by others

There will be many people who will give offense and cause us hurt. However, we are instructed, "Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, 'vengeance is mine, I will repay,' says the Lord" (Rom. 12:19). We are not to pay back, or retaliate against those who harm us. It is valid to defend yourself against a criminal assault (Ex. 22:2-3; Eccl. 3:3, 8), but never to seek harm to others from an attitude of retaliation. "See that no one repays another with evil for evil, but always seek after that which is good for one another and for all men" (1 Thess. 5:15).

Be forgiving

"Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you" (Eph. 4:32). Forgiveness means releasing someone from a debt, letting them go free rather than demanding payment for a wrong committed against us. Forgiveness is an intelligent and repeated choice to pardon those who have done us wrong, even when the offender does not seek forgiveness (Luke 23:33-34). We must learn to forgive ourselves as well as others. Forgiveness is not easy, but it is what God requires

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of us. Also, the Christian displays honor when he overlooks the offense of others, as Solomon writes, “A person's wisdom makes him slow to anger, and it is his glory to overlook an offense” (Prov. 19:11).

Treat your body well

Your body is God’s creation (Gen. 1:26-28), and is wonderfully made (Ps. 139:14). You have intrinsic value and are special because you are made in the image of God, and as a Christian, your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 3:16; 6:19), purchased by the blood of Christ (1 Cor. 6:20); therefore, we should glorify God in our bodies (1 Cor. 6:20). The body is to be treated with respect, even in death (Deut. 34:5-6), because God will eventually resurrect it to immortal life (1 Cor. 15:51-54). In marriage, the body belongs to the spouse for sexual enjoyment and purity (1 Cor. 7:2-5). God intends for us to use our bodies in service to Him, as a “living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God” (Rom. 12:1). God desires that we not abuse our bodies (Lev. 19:28), but that we have good health (3 John 1:2). What we eat and drink should glorify God (1 Cor. 10:31), as we avoid foods and drinks that alter our mood and cloud our thinking (i.e. caffeine, alcohol, unhealthy foods; see Prov. 23:21; Eph. 5:18). Each of us should drink lots of water, exercise regularly, and get enough sleep, as this helps maintain physical and mental health.

Be thankful

“In everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus (1 Thess. 5:18). This means praising God for the good things you enjoy, as well as suffering He sends

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your way to help you grow spiritually (Rom. 5:3-5; 2 Cor. 12:7-10; Jam. 1:2-4). It also means being thankful to others who have helped you. Count your blessings daily.

Difficult Matters

Chapter 6

Difficult Matters

Arranged Marriages

An arranged marriage is one in which the husband and wife are decided by a third party, most often the parents (Gen. 29:26; 34:8; Josh. 15:16-17; Judg. 12:9; 21:1; 1 Sam. 18:17-21; 25:44; 1 Kings 3:1). The first marriage—between Adam and Eve—was arranged by God Himself (Gen. 2:18-24). Some marriages in the Bible were arranged between parents (Gen. 24), and sometimes with the child’s direction (Judg. 14:1-10). Arranged marriages can be lasting and happy, if both persons getting married commit to love each other. It may be difficult to understand or accept the idea of an arranged marriage in our Western culture, but “if biblical precepts are applied consistently, virtually any two people in the world can build a happy marriage and honor the will of God in the relationship.”¹

Polygamy

Monogamy (marriage of one man and one woman) was and is God’s design for marriage (Gen. 2:24; Matt. 19:4-6); however, under the Mosaic Law, polygamy (a husband marrying more than one wife) was permitted and regulated by God (Ex. 21:10; Deut. 21:15-16). Though polygamy was

¹ R.C. Sproul, *Following Christ* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1996).

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permitted among the masses (Gen. 4:19; cf. Gen. 29-30), it was never promoted as God's ideal. Polygamy was forbidden to Israel's kings as it would lead them to idolatry and the perversion of justice (Deut. 17:17; 1 Kings 11:3-6). Polyandry (a wife taking more than one husband) is not mentioned in Scripture. Several of God's chosen servants had more than one wife, but this sometimes caused both social and spiritual problems such as with Abraham and Sarah (Gen. 16:1-16), Jacob and Rachel (Gen. 29:1-30:24), and perhaps most notably Solomon, who had several hundred wives (1 Kings 11:1-3).

The Old Testament records plural marriages, and that with the most prominent of saints. However, according to the record in the primeval Garden of Eden, it was doubtless God's intention that a man should have one wife and the wife but one husband. It was clearly taught in the New Testament that, because of an advance in the relationship between God and His saints, there should be the most careful recognition of this more exalted ideal of one wife and one husband (Eph. 5:22-33).²

Divorce & Remarriage

Scripture teaches that divorce is permissible only when a spouse offends through sexual infidelity (Matt. 5: 31-32), or when an unbelieving spouse abandons their Christian partner (1 Cor. 7:12-16). Divorce is not required, and is

² Lewis S. Chafer, "Marriage" in *Systematic Theology*, Vol. 7 (Grand Rapids, Mich., Kregel Publications, 1997), 234.

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discouraged if any hope of saving the marriage can be found. Forgiveness and love are expected in the Christian toward the offending spouse. Remarriage is permissible when the divorce is biblical (Matt. 5:31-32), when an unbelieving spouse abandons the marriage (1 Cor. 7:12-16), or if a spouse dies (1 Cor. 7:39). The believer must only marry another believer (1 Cor. 7:39). God does not recognize divorces for nonbiblical reasons; however, if a divorced partner remarries, forming a new covenant relationship, this frees the first spouse to remarry (Deut. 24:1-4).

God hates divorce (Mal. 2:16), yet, it is recorded in Scripture that God Himself issued a writ of divorce against His people, Israel, after they had repeatedly engaged in spiritual adultery, saying, “I saw that for all the adulteries of faithless Israel, I had sent her away and given her a writ of divorce” (Jer. 3:8a; cf. Isa. 50:1). The metaphor of divorce here speaks of God sending the Northern Kingdom of Israel away to their destruction under the Assyrians in 722 B.C.

Note in verse 8 [of Jeremiah 3] that God divorced Israel and that it was because of adultery. The Savior’s words in Matthew 19:9 are consistent with this. He taught that divorce is permissible for an innocent partner when the spouse has been guilty of immorality. When we read in Malachi 2:16 that God hates divorce, it must mean unscriptural divorce, not all divorce.³

³ William MacDonald, *Believer’s Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments*, ed. Arthur Farstad (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1995), 1000.

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Celibacy

I wish that all men were even as I myself am. However, each man has his own gift from God, one in this manner, and another in that. ⁸ But I say to the unmarried and to widows that it is good for them if they remain even as I. ⁹ But if they do not have self-control, let them marry; for it is better to marry than to burn *with passion*. (1 Cor. 7:7-9)

Marriage is God's normal design for men and women, but being single may be a blessing in many ways. In some instances, men and women are called by God to celibacy, to live single and never marry (Matt. 19:10–12; 1 Cor. 7:6–7). Some men in the Bible were forbidden to marry, such as when God told Jeremiah, “You shall not take a wife for yourself nor have sons or daughters in this place” (Jer. 16:2). Celibacy has its place in Christianity (Matt. 19:10-12; 1 Cor. 7:6-7), but this is the exception and not the norm.

Same Sex Marriage

He answered, “Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, ‘Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’? So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.” (Matt. 19:4-6 ESV)

Biblically, marriage is between a man and a woman. To redefine marriage contrary to Scripture is an attack on the

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God who established it as a divine institution. Homosexual relationships are contrary to God's intended plan for mankind. The Bible declares homosexuality an abomination (Lev. 18:22; cf. Rom. 1:26-27; 1 Cor. 6:6-10), and those who practice it know it is wrong, for God makes it evident within them (Rom. 1:18-32).

I'm not into bashing sin or sinners. There's simply no place for running around and attacking homosexuals any more than there is for running around and attacking gluttons or liars. I'm also very tolerant of others; but tolerance should never be confused with approval of sin. The world may accept and even celebrate homosexual unions, but regardless of what the world may say, God does not acknowledge or bless a sinful relationship. Someone may say, "How can God disapprove of two people who love each other?" Any claim to love that excludes God, or perverts His Word, is ultimately a false love.

The sin of the homosexual is no better or worse than the sin of the heterosexual. I love sinners and am glad to extend grace and mercy and kindness to all. Lord knows I'm a sinner and God extends grace and mercy and kindness to me every day. However, because I show grace to a sinner—whether his sin is that of homosexuality or something else—I cannot endorse or bless his sin which is contrary to God's Word (Lev. 18:22; 20:13; 1 Cor. 6:9). I understand that some people have strong homosexual tendencies, but those tendencies, like all sinful tendencies, originate from the sin nature, and never from God. Being born with a sinful tendency does not mean a person should yield to it. Some people are born with a tendency toward lying, drug addiction, greed, selfishness, or anger, but this does not mean we must follow it or that God approves of it. God

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saves sinners by the atoning work of Jesus Christ, and He desires our sanctification, that we move away from our sinfulness and become more like Christ.

My Prayer

Chapter 7

My Prayer

Dear Father, I pray that those who read this book will gain wisdom to know your will and be blessed with strength to walk in it. Help them to value Christian virtue and integrity over personal desire. Help them to be a servant, that they may glorify you in all things. Please let their daily focus be You and Your Word more than this world and their life. Help them to lift up Christ so that others may see more of Him. Amen

Biblical Facts about Wisdom

Appendix A

Biblical Facts about Wisdom

1. Wisdom comes from God, “For the LORD gives wisdom; From His mouth *come* knowledge and understanding” (Prov. 2:6).
2. Wisdom lies in what we think, then in what we say and do. “You desire truth in the innermost being, and in the hidden part You will make me know wisdom (Ps. 51:6). “Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders, making the most of the opportunity” (Col. 4:5).
3. Wisdom is better than riches (Prov. 8:11). “How much better it is to get wisdom than gold! And to get understanding is to be chosen above silver” (Prov. 16:16).
4. The humble receive wisdom. “When pride comes, then comes dishonor, But with the humble is wisdom” (Prov. 11:2).
5. Wisdom can be communicated by speech or in writing (1 Kings 11:41; Prov. 15:7; 1 Cor. 2:8, 13). “Yet we do speak wisdom among those who are mature; a wisdom, however, not of this age nor of the rulers of this age, who are passing away” (1 Cor. 2:6).
6. The person who loves his soul seeks wisdom (Prov. 24:14). “He who gets wisdom loves his own soul; he who keeps understanding will find good” (Prov. 19:8).
7. Wisdom is pleasant to the soul. “For wisdom will enter your heart and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul” (Prov. 2:10).

Biblical Facts about Wisdom

8. Wisdom is better than physical strength (Eccl. 9:14-16). “Wisdom is better than strength” (Eccl. 9:16).
9. A wise person accepts reproof and instruction (Prov. 9:8-9). “The wise of heart will receive commands, but a babbling fool will be ruined” (Prov. 10:8).
10. The wise person has persuasive speech. The heart of the wise instructs his mouth and adds persuasiveness to his lips” (Prov. 16:23).
11. The wise person boasts of the Lord (Jer. 9:23-24). “Let him who boasts boast of this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the LORD who exercises lovingkindness, justice and righteousness on earth; for I delight in these things,” declares the LORD (Jer. 9:24).
12. The wise person walks in righteousness. “Whoever is wise, let him understand these things; *whoever* is discerning, let him know them. For the ways of the LORD are right, and the righteous will walk in them, but transgressors will stumble in them” (Hos. 14:9).
13. The wise person hears and acts on the words of Christ. “Everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them, may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock” (Matt. 7:24).
14. The wise person engages in good deeds done in gentleness. “Who among you is wise and understanding? Let him show by his good behavior his deeds in the gentleness of wisdom” (Jam. 3:13).
15. The wise person controls his temper. “A fool always loses his temper, but a wise man holds it back” (Prov. 29:11).
16. The wise person avoids intoxication. “Wine is a mocker, strong drink a brawler, and whoever is intoxicated by it is not wise” (Prov. 20:1)

Biblical Facts about Wisdom

17. Wise people hang-out together (Prov. 13:20). “He whose ear listens to the life-giving reproof will dwell among the wise” (Prov. 15:31).
18. The woman of excellence speaks wisdom. “She opens her mouth in wisdom, and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue” (Prov. 31:26).
19. Wise parents discipline their child. “The rod and reproof give wisdom, but a child who gets his own way brings shame to his mother” (Prov. 29:15).
20. The wise child accepts his parents’ discipline. “A wise son *accepts his father's discipline*, but a scoffer does not listen to rebuke” (Prov. 13:1).
21. A wise son makes his father and mother happy (Prov. 24; 27:11; 29:3). “My son, if your heart is wise, my own heart also will be glad” (Prov. 23:15).
22. One does not have to be old to be wise (Matt. 11:25). “Youths in whom was no defect, who were good-looking, showing intelligence in every *branch of* wisdom, endowed with understanding and discerning knowledge” (Dan. 1:4a).
23. Wisdom leads one away from evil (Prov. 3:7). “A wise man is cautious and turns away from evil, but a fool is arrogant and careless” (Prov. 14:16).
24. The wise person learns by observing nature and other people (Prov. 24:30-34). “Go to the ant, O sluggard, observe her ways and be wise, which, having no chief, officer or ruler, prepares her food in the summer *and* gathers her provision in the harvest” (Prov. 6:6-8).
25. The fool rejects and despises wisdom (Prov. 23:9). “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction” (Prov. 1:7).

Biblical Facts about Wisdom

26. There is a worldly/demonic wisdom that opposes God and His will (Ex. 7:11; Col. 2:23). “This wisdom is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly, natural, demonic” (Jam. 3:15).

Biblical Facts about Fools

Appendix B

Biblical Facts about Fools

The fool, according to Solomon, is a fool by choice and never by chance. He can stop being a fool anytime he's ready to learn and apply God's Word. He makes himself a fool by the way he *thinks*, and is identified as a fool by the way he *speaks* and by his *behavior*. Over time, folly can be so ingrained into a person that neither kindness nor suffering can remove it from him. Here are some biblical facts about the fool:

1. The fool is a fool by choice and never by chance (Prov. 1:22-33). "How long, O naive ones, will you love being simple-minded? And scoffers delight themselves in scoffing and fools hate knowledge?" (Prov. 1:22). "A fool does not delight in understanding, but only in revealing his own mind" (Prov. 18:2; cf. 14:9). He can stop being a fool anytime he's ready to learn and apply God's Word.
2. The fool can be recognized by his outward behavior. "Even when the fool walks along the road, his sense is lacking and he demonstrates to everyone *that* he is a fool" (Eccl. 10:3).
3. The fool loves to slander others. "He who conceals hatred *has* lying lips, and he who spreads slander is a fool" (Prov. 10:18). Slander is the intentional circulation of a falsehood about another for the purpose of destroying his character.
4. Wickedness is like a game to fool, and it thrills him to do evil. "Doing wickedness is like sport to a fool, and *so is* wisdom to a man of understanding" (Prov. 10:23).

Biblical Facts about Fools

5. A fool can spout proverbial wisdom, but it has no meaning to him personally. “*Like a thorn which falls into the hand of a drunkard, so is a proverb in the mouth of fools*” (Prov. 26:9; cf. 15:2, 7). There are people who have some biblical knowledge, but because they are fools it becomes distorted and twisted to their own harm and the harm of others. “A fool’s mouth is his ruin, and his lips are the snare of his soul” (Prov. 18:7; cf. 10:8, 10).
6. Children are naturally bent toward foolishness and the loving parent seeks to discipline it out of them. “Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; the rod of discipline will remove it far from him” (Prov. 22:15). “The rod and reproof give wisdom, but a child who gets his own way brings shame to his mother” (Prov. 29:15).
7. The foolish child rejects his parent’s discipline. “A fool rejects his father’s discipline, but he who regards reproof is sensible” (Prov. 15:5).
8. Over time, as the fool becomes an adult, his folly becomes entrenched in his heart and he is very resistant to any external pressures to change. “A rebuke goes deeper into one who has understanding than a hundred blows into a fool” (Prov. 17:10). “Though you pound a fool in a mortar with a pestle along with crushed grain, *yet* his foolishness will not depart from him” (Prov. 27:22).
9. The fool is a grief to his father and mother. “A wise son makes a father glad, but a foolish son is a grief to his mother” (Prov. 10:1; cf. 15:20). “He who sires a fool *does so* to his sorrow, and the father of a fool has no joy” (Prov. 17:21; cf. 19:13).

Biblical Facts about Fools

10. The fool ruins his own life and fights against God. “The foolishness of man ruins his way, and his heart rages against the LORD” (Prov. 19:3).
11. Fools like to argue with others without a just cause. “Keeping away from strife is an honor for a man, but any fool will quarrel” (Prov. 20:3). It’s better to avoid the fool rather than pursue conflict with him. “When a wise man has a controversy with a foolish man, the foolish man either rages or laughs, and there is no rest” (Prov. 29:9; cf. 20:23).
12. Fools are arrogant and often storm through life without consideration of others. “A wise man is cautious and turns away from evil, but a fool is arrogant and careless” (Prov. 14:16).
13. Those who employ a fool feel the painful effects of his stupidity. “*Like* an archer who wounds everyone, so is he who hires a fool or who hires those who pass by” (Prov. 26:10).
14. Fools repeat the same ugly acts over and over. “Like a dog that returns to its vomit is a fool who repeats his folly” (Prov. 26:11).
15. Fools have no control of their emotions. “A fool always loses his temper, but a wise man holds it back” (Prov. 29:11; cf. 25:28).
16. Fools pursue worldly pleasure and ruin themselves. “The mind of the wise is in the house of mourning, while the mind of fools is in the house of pleasure” (Eccl. 7:4).
17. The words of the wise are gracious, whereas the words of the fool express wickedness. “Words from the mouth of a wise man are gracious, while the lips of a fool consume him; the beginning of his talking is folly and the end of it is wicked madness” (Eccl. 10:12-13).

Biblical Facts about Fools

18. The person who befriends a fool causes himself harm. “He who walks with wise men will be wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm” (Prov. 13:20).

Dealing with the fool:

Wise men often do not answer the fool because he’s not teachable; though there are times the fool needs to be corrected so that his false estimation of himself does not go unchecked. Wise men leave the presence of the fool, as there is no benefit to his company. When one encounters a fool, there are several things one should do depending on the encounter.

1. Once a fool is identified, don’t provoke him, or you will bring grief on yourself. “A stone is heavy and the sand weighty, but the provocation of a fool is heavier than both of them” (Prov. 27:3).
2. Avoid speaking in the presence of a fool, or at least keep your words few. “Do not speak in the hearing of a fool, for he will despise the wisdom of your words” (Prov. 23:9). Fools despise wisdom, so they despise those who speak and live by wisdom.
3. Don’t answer the fool in the midst of his foolishness. “Do not answer a fool according to his folly, or you will also be like him” (Prov. 26:4). It is foolish to try to correct the fool, and is itself a display of folly that reveals a lack of biblical understanding.
4. There are times to address the fool so that he does not think himself wise. “Answer a fool as his folly deserves, that he not be wise in his own eyes” (Prov. 26:5). This type of correction does not seek to

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- correct the fool, but only his false estimation of himself. Wisdom discerns when to answer the fool.
5. Lastly, make the conscious decision to leave the presence of the fool in order to spare yourself any pain. “Leave the presence of a fool, or you will not discern words of knowledge” (Prov. 14:7). This is because “the foolishness of fools is deceit” and there is no truth in their speech (Prov. 14:8b).

Scriptures for the Marriage

Appendix C

Scriptures for the Marriage

Forgiveness

Then Peter came and said to Him, “Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Up to seven times?” Jesus said to him, “I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven. (Matt. 18:21-22)

“Be on your guard! If your brother sins, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. “And if he sins against you seven times a day, and returns to you seven times, saying, ‘I repent,’ forgive him.” (Luke 17:3-4)

Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you. (Eph. 4:32)

So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. (Col. 3:12-13)

Communication and speech

Therefore, laying aside falsehood, SPEAK TRUTH EACH ONE OF YOU WITH HIS NEIGHBOR, for we are members of one another. (Eph. 4:25)

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Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such *a word* as is good for edification according to the need *of the moment*, so that it will give grace to those who hear. (Eph. 4:29)

Do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them; for it is disgraceful even to speak of the things which are done by them in secret. (Eph. 5:11-12)

And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord. (Eph. 5:18-19)

Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its evil practices. (Col. 3:9)

But as for you, speak the things which are fitting for sound doctrine. (Tit. 2:1)

This you know, my beloved brethren. But everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger. (Jam. 1:19)

Do not speak against one another, brethren. He who speaks against a brother or judges his brother, speaks against the law and judges the law; but if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge of it. (Jam. 4:11)

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Do not complain, brethren, against one another, so that you yourselves may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing right at the door. (Jam. 5:9)

They are from the world; therefore they speak as from the world, and the world listens to them. We are from God; he who knows God listens to us; he who is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error. (1 John 4:5-6)

These are grumblers, finding fault, following after their own lusts; they speak arrogantly, flattering people for the sake of gaining an advantage. (Jude 1:16)

Help others who are in need

He who oppresses the poor taunts his Maker, but he who is gracious to the needy honors Him. (Prov. 14:31)

Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather determine this—not to put an obstacle or a stumbling block in a brother's way. (Rom. 14:13)

We urge you, brethren, admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with everyone. (1 Thess. 5:14)

If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and be filled," and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use

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is that? (Jam. 2:15-16)

But whoever has the world's goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him? Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth. (1 John 3:17-18)

Humility and service

For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. (Gal. 5:13)

Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love, being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. (Eph. 4:1-3)

Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. (Phil. 2:3-4)

So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. (Col. 3:12)

Be hospitable to one another without complaint. As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold

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grace of God. (1 Pet. 4:9-10)

Marriage and family

But to the married I give instructions, not I, but the Lord, that the wife should not leave her husband (but if she does leave, she must remain unmarried, or else be reconciled to her husband), and that the husband should not divorce his wife. (1 Cor. 7:10-11)

Husbands love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her. (Eph. 5:25)

Nevertheless, each individual among you also is to love his own wife even as himself, and the wife must see to it that she respects her husband. (Eph. 5:33)

Wives be subject to your husbands as is fitting in the Lord. (Col. 3:18)

Husbands, love your wives and do not be embittered against them. (Col. 3:19)

Wives *be subject* to your own husbands, as to the Lord. But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives *ought to be* to their husbands in everything. (Eph. 5:22-24)

To be sensible, pure, workers at home, kind, being subject to their own husbands, so that the word of God will not be dishonored. (Tit. 2:5)

In the same way, you wives, be submissive to your own husbands so that even if any of them are

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disobedient to the word, they may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives. (1 Pet. 3:1)

For in this way in former times the holy women also, who hoped in God, used to adorn themselves, being submissive to their own husbands; just as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, and you have become her children if you do what is right without being frightened by any fear. (1 Pet. 3:5-6)

Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. (Eph. 6:4)

Dealing with sin

If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother. (Matt. 18:15)

So then we pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another. (Rom. 14:13)

And concerning you, my brethren, I myself also am convinced that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and able also to admonish one another. (Rom. 15:14)

Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted. (Gal. 6:1)

See that no one repays another with evil for evil, but

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always seek after that which is good for one another and for all people. (1 Thess. 5:15)

Encourage one another

Therefore encourage one another and build up one another, just as you also are doing. (1 Thess. 5:10)

But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called “Today,” so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. (Heb. 3:13)

Let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near. (Heb. 10:24-25)

Christian love and peace

“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. “By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” (John 13:34-35)

Be of the same mind toward one another; do not be haughty in mind, but associate with the lowly. Do not be wise in your own estimation. (Rom. 12:16)

If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men. (Rom. 12:18)

Now accept the one who is weak in faith, *but* not for

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the purpose of passing judgment on his opinions.
(Rom. 14:1)

Therefore, accept one another, just as Christ also accepted us to the glory of God. (Rom. 15:7)

Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love, being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. (Eph. 4:1-3)

Now as to the love of the brethren, you have no need for *anyone* to write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another; for indeed you do practice it toward all the brethren who are in all Macedonia. But we urge you, brethren, to excel still more, and to make it your ambition to lead a quiet life and attend to your own business and work with your hands, just as we commanded you, so that you will behave properly toward outsiders and not be in any need. (1 Thess. 4:9-12)

Live in peace with one another. (1 Thess. 5:13)

Love for others

“This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you. “Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends.” (John 15:12-13)

Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give

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preference to one another in honor. (Rom. 12:10)

Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law. For this, “YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY, YOU SHALL NOT MURDER, YOU SHALL NOT STEAL, YOU SHALL NOT COVET,” and if there is any other commandment, it is summed up in this saying, “YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.” Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law. (Rom. 13:8-10)

For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the statement, “YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.” But if you bite and devour one another, take care that you are not consumed by one another. (Gal. 5:13-15)

but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ. (Eph. 4:15)

and may the Lord cause you to increase and abound in love for one another, and for all people, just as we also do for you. (1 Thess. 3:12)

Now as to the love of the brethren, you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another. (1 Thess. 4:9)

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Don't worry

“Do not worry then, saying, ‘What will we eat?’ or ‘What will we drink?’ or ‘What will we wear for clothing?’ “For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. “But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. “So do not worry about tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own. (Matt. 6:31-34)

Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things. The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you. (Phil. 4:6-9)

Control anger

He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit, than he who captures a city. (Prov. 16:32)

Do not be eager in your heart to be angry, for anger resides in the bosom of fools. (Eccl. 7:9)

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He who is slow to anger has great understanding, but he who is quick-tempered exalts folly. (Prov. 14:29)

A man's discretion makes him slow to anger, and it is his glory to overlook a transgression. (Prov. 19:11)

A quick-tempered man acts foolishly, and a man of evil devices is hated. (Prov. 14:17)

Be angry, and yet do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger. (Eph. 4:26)

Cease from anger, and forsake wrath; do not fret, it leads only to evildoing. (Ps. 37:8)

The beginning of strife is like letting out water, so abandon the quarrel before it breaks out. (Prov. 17:14)

Do not associate with a man given to anger; or go with a hot-tempered man, or you will learn his ways and find a snare for yourself. (Prov. 22:24-25)

Guard the tongue

When there are many words, transgression is unavoidable, but he who restrains his lips is wise. (Prov. 10:19)

The one who guards his mouth preserves his life; the one who opens wide his lips comes to ruin. (Prov. 13:3)

He who restrains his words has knowledge, and he

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who has a cool spirit is a man of understanding.
(Prov. 17:27)

He who gives an answer before he hears, it is folly
and shame to him. (Prov. 18:13)

He who guards his mouth and his tongue, guards his
soul from troubles. (Prov. 21:23)

Learn to do good

Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; remove the
evil of your deeds from My sight. Cease to do evil,
learn to do good; seek justice, reprove the ruthless;
defend the orphan, plead for the widow. (Isa. 1:16-
17)

Thus says the LORD, “Do justice and righteousness,
and deliver the one who has been robbed from the
power of his oppressor. Also do not mistreat or do
violence to the stranger, the orphan, or the widow;
and do not shed innocent blood in this place.” (Jer.
22:3)

He has told you, O man, what is good, and what the
LORD really wants from you: He wants you to
promote justice, to be faithful, and to live obediently
before your God. (Mic. 6:8 NET)

In everything I showed you that by working hard in
this manner you must help the weak and remember
the words of the Lord Jesus, that He Himself said, “It
is more blessed to give than to receive.” (Acts 20:35)

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So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all men, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith. (Gal. 6:10)

For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus, who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds. These things speak and exhort and reprove with all authority. (Tit. 2:11-15)

But whoever has the world's goods, and beholds his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him? (1 John 3:17).

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