

Series on the Home #2

Marriage

12 Lessons

Prepared by:
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2007

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"THE HOME: Marriage (#2)

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Lesson One

Marriage as Designed by God

If you were asked: *"What is the oldest institution on the face of the earth?"* Your answer would have to be the **Home!** How did it begin? Why did it begin? What is the Purpose of such? If you believe the Bible to be the Word of God or not, your answers to these questions will be much the same as the Bible answers. The reason should be obvious—it is the way we are made or designed. There is a male, a female, and it requires both to bring a child into the world. Does it take a long list of "PhD's" to understand that the home was from "the beginning!" Whether we have written history that dates back to the beginning of man or not, it should be obvious that in some sense the home had to exist.

As we begin our study on the Christian Home, we must (of necessity) go back to the beginning to see what God's plan was for man. The "Christian" Home, as such, could not have existed before redeemed people began to be called "Christians" (Acts 11:26). A better expression that would be all inclusive from the beginning until the present time would be: "The family as God would have it!" And...if you are to have a "Home" you must also have some kind of a concept of "Marriage!" Thus, this should explain the reason for the five study thoughts that we begin with on "Marriage as Designed by God."

1 – The Creation of the Home

The Bible begins with assuming the existence of God and that He (through Jesus) is the Creator of all things that exist (Genesis 1:1; John 1:1-3). The Home and Marriage was either a design of God or a design of man! The Bible makes the claim that they are the design of God from the beginning. The following insights are given in the first three chapters of Genesis.

1. In whose image was man created? (Gen. 1:26-27) _____
2. Who was created first? (Gen. 2:7) _____
3. Who was given instructions in regards to their responsibilities? _____
4. Who named all of the animals? (Gen. 2:20) _____
5. Why was woman created? (Gen. 2:18, 21-23) _____
6. Who named the Woman? (Gen. 2:23; 3:20) _____

Thought Questions:

1. Is God male or female or both? _____
2. In what sense is man made in the image of God? _____
3. What reason could you give for God creating man first? _____
4. In what sense did Adam and Eve constitute a home? _____

2 – What Constitutes Marriage?

One cannot use the terms, "Marriage" or "Home," without thinking about relationships! While a person can form relationships with other human beings without forming a home or a marriage; yet, it would be impossible to conceive of these two terms without there being some kind of a close relationship of the two persons involved. If you tried to define these two terms, could you define them without using the term "relationship" or one of its synonyms?

Please define:

Marriage _____

The Home _____

1. What are some of the elements that make up the concept of "marriage?"

- a) Gen. 2:22 _____
- b) Gen. 2:24 _____
- c) Gen. 2:24 _____
- d) Gen. 2:24 _____
- e) Matt. 19:6 _____
- f) Rom. 13:7 _____

2. What part does commitment play in being married? _____

3. What is indicated by the expression: "God fashioned into a woman.....and brought her to the man." _____

4. Does the co-habiting of a man and woman in the same house constitute marriage in the sight of God? _____

5. What does the Hebrew writer say about Marriage? (Heb. 13:4) _____

6. Where does the concept of "husband" and "wife" come from? _____

3 – False Conceptions of Marriage

Since we believe that God created man and woman and brought them together to be married, as one, to be jointed together as husband and wife—the following should be obvious from Scripture:

- 1. Marriage is a contract not just between a man and a woman, but also God! This relationship is not to be put asunder by anyone.
- 2. There needs to be a mutual consent on the part of both parties.
- 3. Through the ages of mankind on earth, there has been some kind of public ceremony that is letting all know that they are to be husband and wife (civil ceremony—Rom. 13:1-7).
- 4. There needs to be a consummation....living together as husband and wife.

False conceptions of marriage can be approached from two standpoints: (1) What really constitutes marriage; and (2) What to expect in marriage. As to the first concept on what really constitutes marriage—we have tried to give what we believe the Scriptures teach in the above four points. However, these ideas are being challenged by not only non-religious people in our society, but even some "religious people." Some are advocating the "marriage" of two men or two women to each other. Others are advocating just "living together" under the same roof, but not really be married. For those who do not accept the Bible as the Word of God, we have learned to expect about anything from such people; but, when someone advocates that they believe in the Bible and then reject its teachings, this is very hard to reconcile.

The second area is probably the one that we should spend a little time on—"what to expect in marriage!" Happiness is widely accepted today as a legitimate goal for those who get married. But is this realistic? Survey after survey of married people indicate that less than half of those questioned do not feel that they are really happy in their relationship. The statistics that reveal the amount of divorce, desertion, and separation would also seem to indicate that many are not happy in their marriage. What is wrong? Do we have the wrong outlook about what marriage can bring to us? Do we expect too much of marriage? Is society bringing too many pressures and problems to cope with that is affecting our marriages? Do the pressures of everyday life make demands upon us that go contrary to the satisfying of basic drives within us—especially sexual drives? Can two immature and selfish persons live together without having constant conflict? Have we been brainwashed with Hollywood's false concepts of "living happily ever after?" Maybe a more reasonable goal for marriage might be in order for most of us. A goal that says we hope that we can achieve a fairly adequate adjustment with one another. If our marriage brings more than this, that is fine! But to expect more than what is reasonable may be asking for greater disappointment. Maybe, we should look upon marriage realistically as a continuing process of adaptation and re-adaptation to the changing external and internal demands of a continuing companionship, not a static state of mystical bliss! And....maybe, a better term that we use instead of happiness....should be—"Blessed!" (Matt. 5:1-12).

QUESTIONS IN REVIEW

True or False

1. A successful marriage is a matter of mutual adjustment of two persons possessing good qualities, but less than perfect, who are willing to work for success.
2. Listing desirable qualities may help a couple to marry with their head as well as with their heart.
3. In making marriage successful, maturity is important, but far from being the most important single factor.
4. Length of acquaintance and happiness in marriage have been shown to have no correlation.
5. Marriage and the Home are the oldest institution on earth.
6. God performed the ceremony of marriage for Adam and Eve.
7. Marriage takes place in the eyes of God only when there is a consummation of the marriage vows.
8. The co-habiting of a man and woman in the same house constitute marriage in the sight of God.
9. God says that marriage is honorable, but He will judge "fornicators" and "adulterers."
10. Marriage is a contract or agreement between two people.
11. It is unrealistic to think that marriage will bring continual married bliss.
12. The term "Christian Marriage" denotes that Marriage is a Christian institution.
13. All men, from Adam to the present time, have been under God's Law of marriage.

Lesson Two

Purposes of Marriage

If God designed marriage for mankind (and we believe He did); then, it must have been for man's well-being and happiness (James 1:17) and not for his distress, discouragement, or unhappiness. Therefore, it behooves man to listen and be obedient to God in regards to marriage and the home. God has designed mankind for a marriage relationship and intends for man to be married and keep the earth populated. The following passages give some insight as to the purpose of marriage:

1. **Gen. 1:28** _____

2. **Gen. 2:18** _____

3. **Gen. 2:18** _____

4. **Gen. 2:24** _____

5. **1 Cor. 7:1-2** _____

6. **1 Cor. 7:8-9** _____

Marriage is the making of two persons into a "**oneness!**" (Gen. 2:24; Matt. 19:5). It is important to see why God designed marriage to be this way, as well as to see the benefits from this "oneness" concept. It should be obvious that husbands and wives need to keep developing that "oneness" in their marriage. However, close relationships are not easily developed with most people. The following thoughts are suggested as things to overcome in trying to develop a oneness in marriage:

1. **Because each person is an individual, different from all others.**
2. **Because each person has his or her own ideas.**
3. **Because a person must be willing to share their inner self with others in order to develop closeness. There is a natural reluctance to do this with just anyone.**
4. **Because closeness requires acceptance of others, as well as compromises.**
5. **Because closeness usually takes time to develop. (etc.).**

A fact that should be self-evident—mankind needs this closeness in their lives! Some may obviously need it more than others, but all need it for their well-being and happiness. It offers a **richness** and **security** to one's life that is very desirable. There are places where this closeness can be found:

1. **Family:**

a) **Rom. 1:30-31** _____

b) **Eph. 6:1-4** _____

2. **Friends & Associates:**

a) **1 Sam. 20:17** _____

b) **2 Sam. 1:26** _____

c) **Prov. 17:17** _____

d) **Prov. 18:24** _____

3. God:

- a) John 15:14-15 _____
 b) James 2:23 _____

4. Husband & wife:

- a) Gen. 2:24 _____
 b) Eph. 5:25 _____
 c) Eph. 5:33 _____
 d) Tit. 2:4 _____

If a person is able to develop several of these close relationships in a life-time, he is rich indeed. **Marriage** offers a person one of the **greatest opportunities** to develop this closeness to another person. It is generally conceded that there is no other relationship like it. The meaningfulness would be almost impossible to match. Since marriage is unique among relationships, it has something that is not shared with other close relationships that is so fulfilling and uplifting. In marriage there is the opportunity to experience a full commitment to one another. It is a special "oneness!" The Hebrew word, "**ECHAD**" can be translated: "*One, altogether, Everyone, or Alike.*" It is the same word that is used with reference to God in Deut. 6:4, "**Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord.**" But we know that God or Deity is made up of *Father, Son, and Holy Spirit!* It is what we call "Three in One," or "Tri-unity." In a similar sense, this same oneness is said about the husband and wife relationship (Gen. 2:24). We believe this "oneness" is **emotional, moral, social, physical, and spiritual!** It is to **think, decide, do, and act together as one.**

What about sexual involvement in this "oneness?" This aspect needs to be an expression of that "oneness" between the two. God's Word uses the expression, *one flesh*" (Gen. 2:24). But there is also an intimacy involved in this Gen. 4:1 states, "*Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain...*" **The word, "knew," carries with it a closeness or an intimacy between the two. The following quotations express the idea of these concepts:**

1. *"Sex is a mutual experience, entailing mutual satisfaction and the expression of affection, trust, and desire by both parties rather than the imposition of rights and the unwilling performance of duty."*
2. *"In man, sexual experience is not limited either to the act itself or to a specific time. It is a part of an extension process of growth and new discovery. In its broadest sense it is one of the most fruitful sources for some of the deepest, richest satisfactions known."*
3. *"Sex should point towards a unity of persons and not simply to a conjunction of bodies."*
4. *"It is a oneness that is brought about by a mutual love: tender, intimate, and sacred."*

If one is desirous of having the full extent of this oneness, what should he do? What will help to bring about that desired oneness that brings so much satisfaction? The following four principles are vital to this oneness in marriage:

1. 1 John 3:16-17 _____
2. 1 Peter 3:7 _____
3. Ephesians 4:25 _____
4. 1 Corinthians 7:3-5 _____

Some good advice to a married couple:

1. Be concerned about the needs of one another.
2. Deal kindly and patiently with inhibitions.
3. Show a desire for closeness.
4. Communicate what pleases.

Some observations:

1. Stress personal appearance and hygiene.
2. Openness with one another.
3. Togetherness in activities.
4. Helpfulness.
5. Giving—unselfishness.

"Oneness" does not mean that two people are "carbon copies" of each other, but rather that there is basic harmony between the two that leads to a full, rich, and happy life together. Also, understanding properly the part that sexual activity has in a God-directed marriage is *"the first step out of the jungle and the barnyard."* "Oneness" is an experience of full commitment to one another.

God's Law of Marriage is for all

We often, in our times, use the terms: "Christian Homes," "Christian Mate," or a "Christian Marriage." I believe that these terms are appropriate and do communicate something that is very desirable. However, we believe that there needs to be a clarification of a concept that we can fall into without realizing—that is, Marriage is not a "Christian arrangement!" Marriage was ordained by God before there were any Christians! Marriage has been around even before the "Law of Moses" was given. To talk about Marriage as being Judeo-Christian may be the wrong view about marriage, as such. Certainly, we believe that the relationship between two people who are married ought to be governed by whatever "Law" we are under—whether under the Law of Moses before Christ came, or whether under the Law of Christ today. But what Law was Adam and Eve under, Noah, Abraham, or Jacob? What did God expect of them in their marriage? By what Law did God condemn the Gentile world as recorded by the Apostle in Romans 1:18-32? You cannot say that it was by the Law of Moses—for that Law was never given to them (Deut. 4:7-8; Ps. 147:19-20). The Apostle explained what Law the Gentiles were under in Rom. 2:13-15. And he made it very clear that if there is no Law, there is no SIN! (Rom. 4:15). God's Law of Marriage has been from the beginning! All men are under that Law. It is that Law that makes a person a "sinner" when he breaks it. It is the breaking of this Law that causes us to be under the sentence of death (Rom. 6:23). Today, a person is under Law to God in a general sense even before he comes under and accepts the New Covenant of Christ. If one does not accept Christ and come under this New Covenant, he will suffer the just penalty of his sin and disobedience to God's Law.

QUESTIONS IN REVIEW

True or False

- ___ 1. It is sound reasoning to look upon sexual union among human beings as only reproductive in nature.
- ___ 2. God commands that men marry!
- ___ 3. "Oneness" in marriage denotes the closeness in the relationship between two people.
- ___ 4. Every person needs a close relationship with other persons.
- ___ 5. "Oneness" has reference to the sexual relations between husband and wife.
- ___ 6. If a person can develop several close relationships in a life-time, he is rich indeed.
- ___ 7. "ECHAD" is used with reference to God being "ONE!"
- ___ 8. No marriage can ever attain to a "oneness" in the strict sense of the word.
- ___ 9. Those who do not show a desire for closeness with other humans cut themselves off from having that closeness.
- ___ 10. God's general laws regarding marriage has been in force since the beginning.

Lesson Three

Basic Adjustments in Marriage (#1)

There are three institutions ordained by God at the present time: the Church, the Home, and Government. The Home and Government are recognized as necessary by God in order to have an orderly society. The Church challenges man to live up his highest potential and prepares him for eternity with God. When men will not cooperate with and respect these institutions, strife, warring, and even chaos can be the results. A close relationship between these three needs to be stressed in our society. The Home contributes either good or bad to the Church or the Nation and is therefore recognized as playing an important role to an orderly society. A great effort needs to be put forth by the Church and the Nation to help make the Home more effective.

The strength of a home will depend upon how it faces the conflicts that it will face or the adjustments that have to be made by individuals in the home. In this chapter we are primarily interested in looking at the adjustments that have to be made in the marriage relationship between a husband and wife. We have all heard the expression: "*The Battle of the Sexes!*" We kid about it a lot—but it is there! In the midst of this battle it should be evident that both men and women are different; and yet, we are also much alike. Both our differences and our likenesses are very important. We are physical, social and spiritual beings. We have common needs, drives, urges, and problems. Our challenge is to learn about ourselves, see our problems clearly, face them and overcome them. But, that is not as easy as we wish that it would be. This, therefore, suggests that we need to do a lot of studying and learning in order to meet the challenges that adjustments call for in marriage.

If a person will evaluate his actions and what drives them, he will see that basic motivations are behind all of our actions. It is man seeking satisfaction to his fundamental needs that causes him to act as he does most of the time.

Fundamental needs of mankind in general:

1. All want recognition.
2. All want to be liked by those of our own age.
3. All need security that stems from the love of parents and their protection.
4. All desire to have friends.
5. All have emotional needs—to be wanted, loved, to grow, to own things.
6. All need new adventure, achievement and satisfaction from what we do and experience.
7. All have spiritual needs as well (Matt. 4:4).

Once we have seen clearly why we act as we do, we can do a better job of controlling and directing our actions more appropriately to our situations in life. This should especially be true in the marriage relationship. We have to learn that we cannot have our needs or wants satisfied all the time. Life demands adjustments, and so does marriage of two individuals. This is especially true because of the intimacy of this relationship. There are many adjustments that have to be made just because two people begin living together as husband and wife. Changes are demanded of both! Marriage is not a state of magically bestowed bliss, but a relationship of adjustments!

1 – Living and Acting as One

The Bible records that the man and the woman become "*one flesh!*" (Gen. 2:24). Before marriage, an individual could make their own decisions, go to the places they wanted to go to, and associated with whoever they desired—generally speaking. Now that they are married, they must be considerate of their mate and act together on many things. When first married, this is not as much of a problem as later when the "newness" of marriage wears off. There has to be some freedom of the individual in marriage in order to grow, develop, pursue their own interests, and yet with due regard for the other.

We need to be aware of and look closely at some special areas that will affect a couples' willingness or ability to live and act as one.

1. **Temperament differences.** In most marriages, there seems to be a tendency to marry someone that is different from yourself. Because of these differences, it will be a challenge to think alike or to agree on certain activities—thus, posing a challenge. An extravert wants to be busy doing things, while the introvert likes a quiet evening at home. How do you solve this challenge—what adjustments will have to be made for the couple to live and act as one?
2. **The challenge of "in-laws."** The girl has been quite dependant upon her parents in helping to make decisions, while the boy has been allowed to make most of his decisions on his own. How will they adjust to making their own decisions without creating hard feelings from in-laws? Or, will the "son-in-law" be willing to discuss their problems with his in-laws to make his wife happy?
3. **Money Spending.** Before marriage, both may have worked and had their own money and made their own decisions about what to do with the money. Now they are to live and act as one—thus, it is no longer "his money" or "her money" but both of their money. Arguments over spending money have become a major cause of the break-up of marriages. One puts too much emphasis on buying and the other puts emphasis on being frugal and thrifty.
4. **New Roles.** The young man and the young woman have not been a husband or a wife before. What are their new roles and what is expected? How intelligently will they handle their new role? Obviously, there are many adjustments that will have to be made; can their marriage survive the inexperienced decisions and actions of the two?

These areas of adjustments are the more obvious as two different people become "one flesh" and begin their life striving to live and act as one. It will take time, a lot of patience, and a lot of love for one another in order to build this "oneness" in marriage. Some have suggested that over the years of becoming one that the two people often begin to **Look Alike** as well! Read and appreciate the following passages that emphasize the "oneness" that is also expected of God's people in their relationships with one another:

John 17:20-21 _____

Acts 4:32 _____

1 Cor. 1:10 _____

Eph. 2:13-17 _____

Phil. 2:2-4 _____

2 – Physical Adjustments

Just the very fact that two people will begin to live, eat, and sleep in the same house or apartment will obviously require several adjustments to be made. Each may have had their own bedroom and bed, and possibly their own bathroom—but now may have to share these with another person. Fortunately, there are some very desirable things about being married that help to make these adjustments easier. Otherwise, these adjustments could be very challenging. The differences between male and female will become more pronounced as the two live together day after day in an intimate relationship. The learning process of trial and error, false starts, blind alleys, and some conflict has to be traveled through in order to learn how to make the needed adjustments in each others' lives. The likelihood of a couple having exactly the same attitudes toward money, clothes, religion, politics, occupation, recreation, education, children, food, and the state of the nation is probably inconceivable. Some of the adjustments may have been faced and made during the courtship period. But even new ones will emerge as the two begin living together.

Possibly, the biggest physical adjustment to be made will be in the area of the sexual relationship. This adjustment is more than just a physical adjustment, and can have an affect on all aspects of the couple's life together. One of the values of having pre-marital counseling is receiving suggestions from the minister of a book that both could read that would better prepare them for not only the act of sexual intimacy, but many factors that need to be consider about this activity. Along with this, several passages could be suggested from the Bible that would be of value to the couple as they begin their life together. Following are some of these passages that need to be considered:

Matt. 19:3-6 _____

Rom. 7:1-3 _____

1 Cor. 5:1 _____

1 Cor. 7:1-2 _____

1 Cor. 7:3-5 _____

1 Cor. 7:10-11 _____

1 Cor. 7:12-14 _____

1 Cor. 6:9-10 _____

Eph. 5:22 _____

Eph. 5:23-24 _____

Eph. 5:25 _____

Eph. 5:28-29 _____

Eph. 5:33 _____

Col. 3:18 _____

Col. 3:19 _____

1 Thess. 4:3-5 _____
Tit. 2:4 _____

Many of the above passages we will be looking at further as they apply in our additional lessons.

QUESTIONS IN REVIEW
(These will be at the end of the next lesson)

Lesson Four

Basic Adjustments in Marriage (#2)

(This lesson is a continuation of the previous lesson)

3 – Economic Adjustments

Money difficulties rate high on most observers' lists of marital maladjustments. It is very important that the couple come to some kind of an agreement (even before marriage, if possible) on how the money will be handled. Some kind of a budget needs to be used. Plans for the immediate future and even far-distant future need to be discussed and agreed upon. Use of each other's abilities and talents can help to reduce the strain on the income of the couple. It is very possible that two couples with exactly the same money income may be enjoying quite different standards of living.

To see how important this area of adjustment is and the challenge that it brings to a married couple—look at the number of Scriptures that deal with money in the Bible. There is probably as much or more said about money than any other subject. However, when there is adequate income to meet life's necessities, financial adjustment becomes more of an attitude problem than an income problem. Adjustments may be challenging because of one or both having had their wants and wishes satisfied before marriage, but not in their marital relationship. A couple's attitude about money, the use of money, the saving of money, and even how the money is secured can be a challenge to find a solution to their differences. The following passages can help to illustrate the Bible teaching about money.

- 1 Tim. 6:6-8 _____
- 1 Tim. 6:10 _____
- 1 Tim. 6:17-19 _____
- _____
- Matt. 6:19-21 _____
- _____
- Matt. 16:26 _____
- Luke 12:15 _____
- Luke 12:21 _____
- 2 Cor. 9:6 _____
- 2 Cor. 9:7 _____
- Phil. 4:11 _____

Financial difficulties are common in marriage, but especially at the beginning. It is important that this area be taken very seriously and work together as one to plan out the use of the income that they will have to use. If this is not done quickly, the couple can get into financial trouble very quickly and suffer much hardship to get out from under the heavy burden they may amass even in a short period of time.

4 – Social Adjustments

None of us live in a vacuum! We have our parents, our special friends, school friends, friends in the neighborhood, and friends in the church, etc. But what if a couple gets married that do not have these people in common as friends or associates? Such would entail greater effort in adjusting to each others social list. What if the husband does not like the men-friends of his wife and becomes jealous of such? Or, vice versa on the wife's part? The larger the social list of each and the closer these relationships are, will they not demand a greater effort in adjusting?

What about the social activities that each has been engaged in that may be vastly different from each other? How do you make decisions to cut out, change, include one's mate in that social circle? One of the basic needs of humans is the need to be wanted, loved, appreciated, and accepted by others around us. Just because a couple gets married does not mean that all of these friends, family, and associates must be ignored or forgotten; but rather, adjustments need to be made so that both feel comfortable with each other's social circle.

It would be hard to believe that a newly married couple had no adjustments to be made in their social circles, and that all is going smooth and without any challenges of any kind. Adjustments are a normal process of life, whether one is married or not. Life, as we live it, is constantly facing us with the need of making adjustments. The Apostle expressed how he had learned to deal with the adjustments that were brought into his life—*"I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content!"* (Phil. 4:11). He also added, *"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."* (Phil. 4:13). The early church had an adjustment problem in their midst:

Acts 6:1 _____

The problem was quickly solved by:

Acts 6:3 _____

5 – Spiritual Adjustments

While the above areas of adjustments are important and necessary to work through, especially as a couple begin their marriage, the spiritual adjustment that may need to be made can be more critical and important—since it is dealing with one's relationship with God and their eternal destiny. This, of all areas, should have been critically discussed and worked through before the couple gets marriage; but, it is often neglected until after marriage when it begins to be an issue that is raised by one or both. One's religious beliefs and practices should not only be important to them, but they should serve as a foundation of all else that makes up one's life and activities. If the couple have grown up in the same church and both hold a similar commitment to the teachings of Christ, the adjustments should be minor. One may have habitually offered prayer at each meal, while the other may have done so occasionally. One may read and study the Bible every day, while the other may only do so occasionally. etc. These are differences that should be fairly easy to work through and the adjustments would be minimal.

However, where the couple may be from two different religious backgrounds, the adjustments may not only be greater, but it may take some time to work through their differences that they hold to—if they can work through them. As is often the case, they each hold to their separate beliefs and do not have the closeness that they would have had if they had similar beliefs and commitments. We have not dealt with the question of whether a Christian should marry someone outside the Lord's church; and it would seem to be a good spot to do so at this time. Is such forbidden? Is it a sin? Is anything said about such? The following Scriptures may be of help to answer these questions.

1 Cor. 7:13-16 _____

1 Peter 3:1-2 _____

How would you explain this passage in light of the above passages?

2 Cor. 6:14-18 _____

Now, if we come back to the question about mixed religious marriages but rephrase our question like this: *"Is it wise or the best thing to marry someone from a different religious background or no religious background at all?"*.....I certainly would need to answer this question with "NO!" The reason being—that many marriages or one's religious commitment have not survived the differences brought about by such a marriage. That doesn't mean that a marriage cannot work, or be a good marriage; but it will require some mature thinking and acting on the part of both parties. While some Christians have been pulled away from the church; others have been able to so influence their mate that they became Christians.

Observations

Marriage is a wonderful gift given to his creatures. He has hallowed and sanctified it and its relationships. It is a gift that provides satisfaction of many needs of humans. It can be a very happy and blessed thing in our lives if properly prepared for and maintained correctly. But, every marriage is a risk in one sense, but some are greater risk than others. Marriage will have its problems just like any other relationship of man, but they can be faced and solved if worked at.

QUESTIONS IN REVIEW

True or False

- ___ 1. Racially mixed marriages have not been as acceptable by society at large in the past, but are becoming more acceptable.
- ___ 2. By Law, Society does not demand or even expect preparation for marriage.
- ___ 3. If there is no sexual intimacy, there would be no marriage.
- ___ 4. Adequate sexual adjustment is more a matter of anatomy than an attitude.
- ___ 5. People are often most easily offended by those closest to them in affection and esteem.
- ___ 6. Absolutes pose a real problem in marital adjustment and success.
- ___ 7. The method of handling income is not as important as the means by which the method is chosen.
- ___ 8. Conflict growing out of religious faith, moral standards, age, or cultural background may prove to be unyielding.
- ___ 9. Because adjustment in marriage is necessary to its success, things that are held in common should make the adjustment period easier.
- ___ 10. Marriage is a church institution or sacrament.
- ___ 11. Marriage counselors say that 2 out of 5 arguments in the home arise over money.
- ___ 12. A successful marriage is a matter of mutual adjustment of two persons possessing good qualities, but less than perfect, who are willing to work for success.
- ___ 13. Length of acquaintance and happiness in marriage have been shown to have no correlation.
- ___ 14. The strength of a home will depend upon how it faces or deals with adjustments that must be made.
- ___ 15. Many of man's actions are motivated by the desire to satisfy a built-in need.
- ___ 16. Marriage is not a state of magically bestowed bliss, but a relationship of adjustments.
- ___ 17. One's temperament may call for adjustments in marriage as much as "in-law" challenges.
- ___ 18. Physical adjustments in marriage involves more than sexual activity.
- ___ 19. One's social circle will often call for adjustments to be made in order to have a successful marriage.
- ___ 20. Spiritual adjustments are the more critical ones that have to be made.

Lesson Five

Basic Strengths in Marriage (#1)

There are many factors that help to not only keep a marriage together, but also to enhance it and make it a very desirable relationship. In this lesson we want to look at five of these factors and see why they are so important to a marriage staying together.

Commitment for Life

The woman Ruth (Ruth 1:16) is often referred to as a prime example of loyalty and commitment! She was willing to leave her family and homeland and go and live among a different people with different customs and beliefs. She was committed to Naomi, her people, and her God.

Commitment is an important principle in every area of our lives! The automobile manufacturers say they are “*committed to excellence.*” Professional athletes are committed to be the very best they can be. People in general talk about being committed to their job, their company, or their community. Some even talk about being committed to the Lord and His church. We are fully convinced that commitment is not only foundational to a successful Christian life, but to marriage and the home.

To some, commitment is a trap that is suffocating to the one that wants to get out of the trap. It is compared to being in bondage to something that is failing and going down hill. But, there is possibly nothing more important to the marriage relationship than a determination that it should last. In a survey of 186 couples, commitment was one of the top three things listed that makes for strong and lasting marriages. *“A commitment to stay married settles it and allows no other choice. It means that Divorce is out of the question!”*

What is Meant by Commitment? Words are often used in various shades of meaning. Good communication requires making sure that my thoughts are being expressed accurately and clearly. How are we using the word, commitment?

“To entrust one’s self to someone or something.”

“To put one’s self in another’s hands.”

“To pledge one’s self to another.”

“It is to promise to do something and keep it.”

Ruth is certainly a good illustration of what is generally meant by commitment. She made a promise and certainly kept that promise. Four passages of Scripture help to illustrate what is involved in commitment:

1. Hebrews 10:23 _____
2. 1 Peter 2:23 _____
3. 2 Timothy _____
4. John 8:34 _____

God's faithfulness and commitment to his promises is emphasized in many passages. It is also pointed out that man can commit his ways to God and righteousness or to Sin and wickedness. We are encouraged to commit our ways to the Lord!

1. **Ps. 37:5** _____

2. **1 Peter 4:19** _____

Commitment to marriage and the home is a MUST just like our commitment to God and His will in our lives. *Clarifying our Commitment about Marriage:*

1. It is a commitment to the concept of marriage! God created a male and female, not two males or two females. His purpose for creation was to institute the institution of marriage. He brought Adam and Eve together and Adam got the message as indicated in Genesis 2:24: *"Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh."*

Many in our society are questioning the very concept of marriage. This is shown not only by their statements, but by their actions that belittles marriage as an acceptable arrangement. While some may question marriage, they enter into a relationship of co-habitation. If this arrangement does not work out, they can break it off and try to find another person with which to co-habitat. What is obviously missing in this arrangement is **Commitment!** A bumper sticker illustrates an attitude on the part of these people—*"The major cause of divorce is marriage!"* The idea is...if you do not get married (make a commitment to one another), then there is no divorce! But in reality there is a "divorce" between the two; and if children are involved, they will suffer just as much as if there was a "marriage" or "commitment" between the two parties. Such actions are a sad commentary on man's ignorance and disregard of God's Word on this subject. It is God's will that marriage be entered into for life!

Romans 7:2 _____

It is up to those who are "committed to God" to also be "committed to the concept of marriage."

2. It is a commitment to each other as well! A person can be committed to the concept of marriage, but not necessarily to their mate. To illustrate: *"Yes, I believe in marriage, but I want to divorce this mate and marry another."* And this is what has been happening for centuries. The problem again comes down to a lack of full commitment to each other for life. A couple can even be committed to marriage and keep the marriage together, but become alienated from each other. *"To have and to hold from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish until death us do part..."*

When a couple makes their vows, they are vowing to love and be concerned for each other for life! These vows must be taken seriously and not like a young lady expressed to her boy friend on the back of her photograph: *"My dearest Tom, I love you with all my heart. I love you more and more each day. I will love you forever and ever. I am yours for all eternity. Signed, Dianne."* *"P.S. If we ever break up, I want this picture back."* This kind of shallow commitment is one of the reasons for failure in many relationships.

A President of a Bible College was faced with a momentous decision. His wife had contacted Alzheimer's disease. It had gotten so bad that he could no longer continue as President if he took care of his wife. His closest friends advised him to put her in an institution to be cared for, so he could continue with his work with the college. They reminded him that he was still young, only 57 years old. But he made the decision to resign and spend his time caring for his wife. He had committed himself to her 42 years ago—in sickness and in health—to love, honor, and cherish. It was a matter of integrity with him. He later wrote of the joys and blessings he had received as a result of the special time spent with his wife.

The Value of Commitment: Anything that is good should have value to mankind. We believe that commitment in marriage has great value to offer to those willing to make the decision. We suggest that at least the following three things can help illustrate this value.

1. **It puts away selfishness in marriage.** The marriage doesn't just last as long as things are going well.
 - a) It is not just holding on until someone better comes along.
 - b) It is to show concern for each other's happiness.
 - c) It is to love and cherish one another.
 - d) It is to show my concern for what my mate thinks, his/her values, his/her goals, and his/her dreams.
 - e) It is to say that your life makes a difference to me and others.
 - f) It is to invest unconditionally in the well-being of the other person.
2. **It shows our integrity.** It is more than being bullheaded about keeping a marriage together.
 - a) It is a sacred promise to a mate—before God and others.
 - b) It is to hate what God hates (divorce), knowing the terrible consequences of such.
 - c) It is to hold steady when the temptation is to run from a difficult situation or relationship.
 - d) It gives staying power to preserve a needed relationship.
3. **It can bring joy, satisfaction, happiness, and contentment.**
 - a) Such commitment gives peace of mind, security, and a sense of well-being to those in the relationship.
 - b) This is especially true for children that have come out of such a relationship.

What Cost Does Commitment Require? Anything worthwhile usually comes at a price or cost to the person. The greater the value, the greater the cost may be! Since commitment is of such great value to mankind, especially in our relationship situations, we can expect a high price that may have to be paid for it. The four following thoughts help to illustrate this.

1. **It requires Trustworthiness.** That my word is my bond. I will live up to my promises. Unfortunately, children often learn not to trust others or to be trustworthy themselves in their young years that carry over into adulthood. One of the reasons why “unfaithfulness” on the part of a mate is so devastating—it destroys the trust that had been built between the two persons. The price must be paid to keep this trust strong between husband and wife. It is worth the cost! God wants us to put trust in Him as well (Proverbs 3:5)

2. **It requires Endurance.** It is not just to stay married, but it is to help one another to make the marriage richer, happier, etc. The rewards of the Christian life come from endurance. *“.....be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.”* (Revelation 2:10). The same endurance in marriage brings its rewards as well.
3. **It requires growth and development.** It is to make a real effort to keep ourselves attractive outwardly and inwardly. It is to be desirable company—a joy to be with. We should not just get old, but grow and mature in our attitudes and actions. *“Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day.”* (2 Corinthians 4:16). It is a determination not to let the marriage become stale and boring.
4. **It requires the responsibility of making the choice.** To be committed is not something forced on us, but a choice we can or cannot make. God does not force us to become His children, but rather gives us the choice. It is a great choice, the right choice, a choice that has great and eternal blessings. The same is true of commitment in marriage. It is a great choice, the right choice, a choice that will bless many lives for here and hereafter.

Concluding Thoughts: There should be no question about it...there should be no P.S. in our marriages....*“If this breaks up, I want my picture back.”* Marriage should be for life....and hopefully, for a richer life! Neither should there be a P.S. in our commitment to serve God. We have made a commitment to follow Christ. It is a commitment for life—until death. We must never turn back, for He will never turn His back on us (Hebrews 3:12-15).

QUESTIONS IN REVIEW

True or False

- ___ 1. There is a difference between being committed to marriage and in being committed to one's mate for life.
- ___ 2. The major cause of divorce is marriage.
- ___ 3. Commitment helps one to make hard decisions in life.
- ___ 4. Commitment should be for life, but also for a richer life.
- ___ 5. Ruth, in the book of the Judges, is not the best example of commitment.
- ___ 6. Commitment becomes a trap that is suffocating to those who want out of the trap.
- ___ 7. The word, "commitment," needs to be clearly defined.
- ___ 8. God is our best example of commitment.
- ___ 9. Commitment in Marriage is a MUST, not an option.
- ___ 10. Co-habitation does not have commitment.

Lesson Six

Basic Strengths in Marriage (#2)**Proper Communications**

“So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath.”

(James 1:19). All marriages face adjustment problems to some degree or another. If these adjustments are not made, the marriage is heading for trouble and possible break-up. The following list will give an indication of some of the main reasons for failure of marriages:

- | | |
|----------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|
| 1. Immaturity (65%) | 5. Personality conflicts (27%) |
| 2. Selfishness (48%) | 6. Poor Sexual adjustments (25%) |
| 3. Financial problems (39%) | 7. Third party entanglements (18%) |
| 4. Lack of mutual interests and goals (37%) | 8. Burden of children (4%) |

However, it is believed by many that there is a basic problem underlying the above reasons—A LACK OF EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION! Their reasoning is—when people lose the ability to communicate well with one another, resentment continues to build, mutual trust between the two will vanish, and the relationship dies. Statistics were compiled by a Marriage Counseling Service that came up with the following list of things that break up a marriage:

- | | |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. Bad Communication | 6. Quarreling |
| 2. Selfishness | 7. Sexual incompatibility |
| 3. Infidelity | 8. Lack of affection |
| 4. Money disagreements | 9. Lack of trust |
| 5. No common interests | 10. Untidiness |

As you can see—bad communication was at the top of the list and possibly the underlying factor that help cause the other factors. Another survey was taken of 2,000 marriages with the question—**“What is the most vital ingredient for married bliss?”** The following are the top ten items listed:

- | | |
|------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. Togetherness | 6. Children |
| 2. Consideration | 7. Shared interests |
| 3. Discussing things | 8. Sexual compatibility |
| 4. Mutual trust | 9. Financial security |
| 5. Love and affection | 10. Happy home life |

Again, it is obvious that good communications are indicated as helping to make for a happy home situation. A quote from Corrales and Miller indicates the same: *“Couples in which both husband and wife were high in accurately understanding their partner's view on a number of issues were more satisfied with their marriages.”*

How Does God Value Good Communications? Since speaking (communicating) is such an important factor in human relationships, the Bible has much to say about such. The very fact that God chose to make known the "good news" (Gospel) through preaching and teaching should certainly indicate how He values good communication (Romans 1:16; 1 Corinthians 1:21; etc.). Man's salvation eternally actually depends upon an accurate and effective communicating of that message(Galatians 1:6-9).

1. What does God have to say about good communication?

- a) James 1:19 _____
- b) 1 Peter 2:1 _____
- c) Eph. 4:29 _____
- d) 1 Peter 3:9 _____
- e) Colossians 4:6 _____
- f) Ephesians 4:25 _____

2. What is a basic requirement of good communication? (James 1:26; 3:8)

3. How does God describe the tongue? (James 3:1-12)

- a) _____
- b) _____
- c) _____
- d) _____

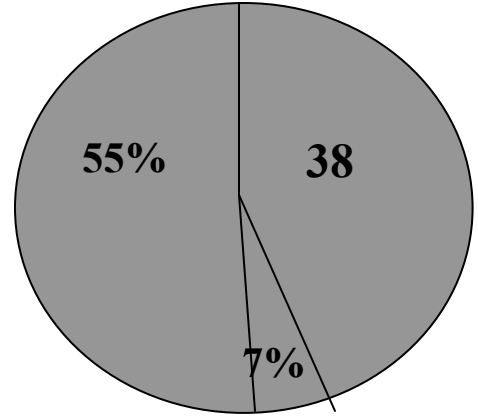
How Do We Communicate? To communicate effectively, there must be the desire to do so! Then, the desire needs to be followed by a conscious effort to use more than one means of communicating.

- 1. **Verbal.** The use of speech or words is basic in communicating to others our thinking and intentions. However, it is important that correct words and understood words be used or there will be a miss communication to the other person. Accuracy is very important in order to communicate correctly.
- 2. **Non-Verbal.** We not only speak with words, but we speak in a certain way, with a certain attitude, and with a certain spirit. Even our very presence and appearance says something not confined to words. It is estimated that as high as 93% of the communicating we do is in a **non-verbal** form! The following chart shows the outcome of a survey that compared **verbal** and **non-verbal** communication. 55% was considered **non-verbal** and only 7% was with actual words. The other 38% was a form of the **non-verbal**—such as the tone of one's voice! It should be obvious to all that people often respond more to our **Actions** than to our **Words**!

A sad fact is that an unethical act can cancel the words of my mouth. Our spirit and attitude can be communicated in a powerful way both positively or negatively by **non-verbal** actions. It places a strong importance upon the speaker's character if he is to communicate effectively.

Some Examples of Non-Verbal Communication:

It is obvious that our very presence and appearance says something not confined to words. **Affection** can be communicated between two people by a **meaningful glance, a smile, or a touch of the hand.** **Disapproval** can be shown by a **frown** or a **threatening gesture.** **Attitudes** and **Spirits** are communicated in a powerful way, both positively and negatively.



1. **What does the apostle Paul admonish Timothy about this important subject?**

- a) 1 Timothy 4:12 _____
- b) 1 Timothy 4:16 _____

2. **What does Jesus say in Matthew 5:13 that indicates non-verbal communication as being so important?**

One of the grave dangers that parents need to watch for with their children—to be sure that their **verbal** and **non-verbal** communications do not contradict each other day after day. If they do, we can expect our children to become confused and discouraged! The same could obviously be true of our mates!

This may be one of the reasons why Christians are not as effective in communicating the gospel to their friends and family—they see too much inconsistency between our verbal and non-verbal communications.

3. **What does the apostle Paul have to say about this in Philippians 2:14-15?**

Facial Expressions communicate by: (1) Tightly closed mouth; (2) Open mouth; (3) Lips stretched tightly; (4) Gritting teeth; (5) Tongue sticking out; (6) Chewing one’s lip; (7) Quivering lips; (8) Moist lips; and (9) Dry lips.

Such **Gestures** as closing one’s fists, pointing a finger, or folding arms across our chest can communicate things to others.

Our **Physical Appearance** will have some influence—such as: carriage, poise, dress, forcefulness of personality, etc.

Our very **Character** can come through in our speech: both **verbal** and **non-verbal!** The following can illustrate:

1. Integrity	Dishonesty
2. Morality	Low Morals
3. Open-mindedness	Close minded and stubborn
4. Fair	Bigoted
5. Selflessness	Selfishness
6. Courage	No backbone
7. Impartiality	Partial
8. Sympathy	Unsympathetic
9. Sincerity	Insincere
10. Sensitive	Insensitive

It is important to understand some of the factors that causes bad or no communications between husband and wife (and others, as well). The following will help to illustrate:

- 1. Differing backgrounds and experiences in life.**
- 2. Taking each other for granted.**
- 3. Reading something into the other person's words and actions that were not intended.**
- 4. A sense of competition between the two.**
- 5. Low self-esteem on the part of one or both.**
- 6. A failure to listen properly.**
- 7. That communication is more than just words.**
- 8. The difficulty of the listener having the same understanding of the words used to try to communicate.**
- 9. Being too judgmental in words and attitudes.**
- 10. Male and female variations as well as individual variations.**

If we want to effectively communicate with our mate, it is important that we realize the many factors that enters into communicating. It is not a simple process, but a complex one that requires some diligence on each of our parts. There is much more that can and should be said on this vital topic.

QUESTIONS IN REVIEW

True or False

1. **Bad Communication is very low on the list of things that break up a marriage.**
2. **God's Word says very little about the value of good communications.**
3. **Non-verbal communication is no different than verbal communications.**
4. **It is impossible to pick up on the conflict between verbal and non-verbal communications.**
5. **Communication is a relatively simple process.**
6. **Good communications helps to make for a happy home.**
7. **Preacher and Teaching that is commanded in the Bible shows how important good communications are.**
8. **The Bible's description of the tongue is trying to indicate the important of our speech.**
9. **One's life must be in accord with what one says or he is not communicating correctly.**
10. **One's character comes through in both the verbal and non-verbal communications.**

Lesson Seven

Basic Strengths in Marriage (#3)**Control of Emotions and Actions**

“But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified” (1 Corinthians 9:27). Self-control must characterize the Christian! For the same reasons, self-control is needed by both husbands and wives to build a strong marriage. Self-control is a result of the Holy Spirit at work in our lives through His inspired Word! (Galatians 5:22-23; 2 Peter 1:5-11) It comes as a result of a decision that we make to bring our lives into conformity to the will of God (Romans 12:1-3). A lack of self-control can show the insincerity of our religion, and as well, it can also show the insincerity of a person’s efforts at making his marriage acceptable and right in the sight of God (James 1:26). The emphasis in our study is on self-control, indicating that it is a choice that we must make to bring ourselves under the control of God’s will for our lives. Paul illustrated how strong this emphasis should be when he said he had to discipline his body and bring it into subjection so that he would not be lost.

We believe that strong and happy marriages come from people who make a diligent effort to exercise self-control:

1. *In their Speech (James 1:26)*
2. *In their Emotions (Ephesians 4:31)*
3. *In their actions (Ephesians 4:22-24)*

Such people are in control of those things that are destructive to close human relationships of all kinds. We have spent two lessons trying to show the importance of controlling of speech. In this lesson we want to look at control of our Actions and Emotions.

The Need to Control Our Actions: Strong marriages require correct or righteous actions! It is striving to do that which is just, fair, and right in the sight of God and man. It is striving to live up to the righteous law of God....striving to die to sin (disobedience) (1 John 2:1; Romans 6:1-2). The apostle John states clearly who is righteous in the sight of God:

1 John 3:7

So, right actions should come from “righteous” people...or from one who allows God’s truth to dwell in him, control him, and guide him. To follow all of God’s law is to practice right actions. There are, of course, many actions that could be listed. But we feel that there are four that are very important for married couples to place their emphasis upon.

1. **Submission to one another (Ephesians 5:21).** It is the willingness to submit to one another because of our respect and reverence of God. Jesus is the perfect example of this submission for the good of mankind:
 - a) He submitted to death for mankind’s salvation;

- b) He submitted to the need of mankind.
- c) Philippians 2:5-8

Mutual submission is found in all areas of life. People submitting to governing powers (Romans 13:1-7). We pay taxes and submit to their laws. But government must also submit to the needs of its citizenship....protection, etc. Wives are to submit to their husband's headship...be submissive in all things (Ephesians 5:24). But the husband is to submit to his wife's needs as well...protection, security, etc.

Mutual submission destroys:

- a) The problem of who is the boss around here.
- b) Selfishly getting my own way in things.
- c) Family decisions that are one-sided.
- d) Money spent one-sided.
- e) Wife and children forced to be content with left-overs.

2. **By having a servant attitude (Ephesians 5:22-29).** It is the recognition that both husbands and wives have needs that should be met and that can be supplied by each other if there is a willingness to be a servant to others. Jesus again showed us the perfect example of servanthood on the night of his betrayal (John 13:1-17). His disciples were arguing over who would be the greatest in the kingdom. So Jesus let them know clearly that the servant is the greatest (Matthew 20:21-28). He made His point clear by washing the disciples' feet. A servant attitude will end the battle among husbands and wives over who is the greatest!

- a) Hopefully, they are servants to one another.
- b) The husband serves his wife's needs.
- c) The wife serves her husband's needs.
- d) He loves her as Christ loved the church.
- e) She loves him, as the church is to love Christ.
- f) He cares for her as he would his own body.
- g) She cares for him, as she would like to be cared for.

A servant attitude should help one to deal with a selfish outlook. Philippians 2:3-4

- a) A selfish person cannot be a servant to others as he should.
- b) He is too concerned about his own wants and wishes.
- c) The most unhappy people are selfish people.
- d) The happiest people are those who are servants—unselfish people.

3. **By Valuing one another (Ephesians 5:30-31).** We need to help our mate feel good about themselves, so they can rest secure in our love for them. It is when one feels good about himself that helps him to reach out to serve others. Jesus knew who He was and was able to humble Himself in washing His disciples' feet. Each mate in a marriage has things to offer to the other to help make the other a better or more complete person. This showing of value of each other needs to be done in words and in actions (1 John 3:18).
4. **By showing proper respect for one another (Ephesians 5:33).** Love and respect for one another are shown by little things as well as big things. When we interrupt, badger,

put down, ignore, or condemn our mates, we are not showing proper respect or love for them. The shame of this is.....we would not think of doing these things to others who are not as close in relationship to us. 1 Corinthians 13:4-8 shows the proper attitudes and actions that should be shown:

- a) **Be patient with one another.**
- b) **Be kind to and do kindnesses to one another.**
- c) **Not be envious of one another.**
- d) **Not put self above others.**
- e) **Not act unseemly in front of others.**
- f) **Not just seek one's own will.**
- g) **Not easily offended.**
- h) **Thinks the best of the other.**
- i) **Is not happy when the other one is down.**
- j) **Bears one another's burdens.**
- k) **Puts trust in each other.**
- l) **Hopes for the best for the other.**
- m) **Willing to suffer in the other one's place.**

It is also obvious that the Golden Rule certainly applies here as well (Matthew 7:12). It is the little things that often make the big difference!

The Need to Control our Emotions: Emotions often dictate our actions unless we have them under the control of our will and God's will. One of the more destructive emotions that needs to be brought under control is anger! Passages that help to show this:

- 1. **Psalm 37:8** _____
- 2. **Proverbs 16:32** _____
- 3. **Ephesians 4:26-27, 31** _____
- 4. **Colossians 3:19** _____

Anger can be shown or expressed in various ways. Men have tried to express these variations by special terms to identify each:

- | | | | |
|----------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|--------------------------|
| 1) Bitterness | 6) Intolerance | 11) Seditions | 16) Unforgiveness |
| 2) Malice | 7) Criticism | 12) Jealousy | |
| 3) Clamor | 8) Revenge | 13) Attack | |
| 4) Envy | 9) Wrath | 14) Gossip | |
| 5) Resentment | 10) Hatred | 15) Sarcasm | |

Uncontrolled anger can cause great harm to mankind in general. There is no telling how many wars or how much ruin to nations have been fought or caused because of uncontrolled anger. Following are some of the possibilities that anger can cause in the home:

- 1) **Wives and children who are battered and abused.**
- 2) **Children alienated from parents by such.**
- 3) **Most emotionally scarred persons are the results of someone's anger.**

- 4) Many physical illnesses are brought on by continued anger.
- 5) Endless damage done to the Lord's Cause and Kingdom.
- 6) Family relations badly damaged that can't be mended.
- 7) It can even end in murder (Cain).

Being bitter towards one's wife is condemned by God (Colossians 3:19), which shows that there are grave dangers of such to the home. For anger to be dealt with correctly, one must see the need of forgiveness from God and the one sinned against because of anger (1 John 1:9; Ephesians 4:31-32). Also, the wise man said, "*Hatred stirs up strife: but love covers all sins.*" (Proverbs 10:12). We also need the wisdom from above that helps us to be peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, and full of mercy (James 3:16-17). Patience is also needed as well (Luke 21:19).

Concluding Thoughts: From the above thoughts, it would seem obvious that good marriages require that we exercise self-control of our emotions and our actions, as well as our speech. It should also be obvious that what makes me a better Christian can also make me a better husband or wife. Strong marriages do not just happen, they are made by God and man working together.

QUESTIONS IN REVIEW

True or False

- ___ 1. Self-Control is stressed in Scripture and is therefore important in marriage as well.
- ___ 2. "Righteous people" are those who do "right things."
- ___ 3. It is wrong to say that the husband should submit to the wife.
- ___ 4. Mutual submission has many values.
- ___ 5. A person cannot really control their emotions.
- ___ 6. The Apostle Paul gives himself as an example of one who was not in proper self-control before his conversion.
- ___ 7. Self-control is needed in more than just our emotions.
- ___ 8. Continuous "right actions" can only come from a self-controlled person.
- ___ 9. Having a spirit of "servanthood" helps us to be in control of our lives.
- ___ 10. We show that we do not value others when our lack of self-control is evident.

Lesson Eight

Basic Strengths in Marriage (#4)**Unconditional Acceptance**

When we marry--We know the other person is not perfect; but, we feel that with a little work, we can change them. What I don't like about my mate, I can help them change. Marriage is often built upon unrealistic idealism. We start with high expectations; but then, it becomes all too obvious that it just isn't that way. Then, unfortunately—some marriages collapse. To build a strong marital relationship: I first have to accept reality! And then, I need to accept the person to whom I am married. Read Rom. 15:1-7.

What is "Acceptance?" A general acceptance of people is often based on a list of "Do's & Don'ts" that a person must conform to in order to be accepted.

- 1) Do right—I'll accept you.
- 2) Do wrong—I'll reject you.

Unconditional Acceptance of people is to accept a person where they are & who they are. This does not condone that which may be wrong in their lives; but rather—accepting them where they are as a person. It is not pretending that everything is terrific or no weaknesses or flaws exist. Quote: *"To look at my life, my self, my mate, my work, etc., and say: 'No, my life is not perfect in all areas, but I can live with it. I can accept things as they are right now. I'll keep on growing and hope for changes for the better, but I can live with life as it is now.'"* It is accepting myself and my spouse "as is." It is to stop trying to force changes in each other.

Phil. 4:11

The excuse for trying to change each other is—*"It's what is best for them."* But what is best for them is:

- 1--Let them be themselves. Back off.
- 2--Give our non-judgmental acceptance.
- 3--Allow the person freedom to act.

What is the Biblical Concept of Acceptance? Jesus illustrates the idea. He offers friendship to us. He does not say—"when you have put away all your wrongs, then I'll accept you!" He accepts us as we are—Sinners! We have a song that expresses the thought—**"Just as I am, without one plea..."** When we feel accepted—then we have room to grow & change.

Rom. 15:1-7 states it this way: *"As Christ received us (accepted us)—So receive (accept) one another."* We stop being so judgmental about one another. We accept one another where they are—LET THEM GROW—GIVE THEM TIME!

James 2:1-9 shows the wrong approach. Their acceptance was based on outward dress—TERRIBLE! To show respect of persons is judgmental non-acceptance. James also calls it SIN!

His admonition—Don't show favoritism—accept one another in the same way.

Acceptance of Self makes it Easier to Accept Others!

Matt. 22:39

We are to love our neighbor as we love ourselves. Love of one's self becomes the example of how to love our neighbor. But what if one does not really love himself? What if one does not accept self?

Eph. 5:28-29

A man is to love his wife as he loves himself. What if he does not love himself—even neglects & destroys himself? *"Self-love is neither to be inferior or superior."* We don't love ourselves because we are inferior or superior. We love ourselves because of self. I accept myself for who I am. My self-worth or self-esteem depends upon my acceptance of self for who I am! (Not who I am not!!)

We believe that strong marriages come from acceptance! I give up my desire to change my mate. After all—differences is what makes life interesting!_We need to be able to laugh at strange behavior & unique ways._And...I cannot change my mate anyway._He or She must do that, if done._I must accept my mate's limitations. We all have limitations—some more than others—but all have them._I do not focus on limitations! I do dwell on the strengths of my mate. (Phil. 4:8) I do look for positive things about my mate.

A. I do not let other's actions control my thinking or actions.

- 1) ***"Love your enemies."***
- 2) ***"Do good, pray for, etc." (Matthew 5:45)***
- 3) Even my enemy is not to control my thinking or actions—much less my mate.

B. Be grateful for the mate that I have.

- 1) Stop looking for greener pastures.
- 2) Be grateful that I have someone who loves me & will live with me.
- 3) No one is perfect—another mate is not the solution.
- 4) ***"A prudent wife is from the Lord."***

C. Be understanding & forgiving.

- 1) Eph. 4:32—***"And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you."***
- 2) Do not expect perfection.
- 3) Realize that we all make mistakes.
- 4) Rom. 3:23
- 5) Realize that I too need understanding & forgiveness.
- 6) I need acceptance for who I am—not what I ought to be.
- 7) Bitterness, hate, grudges—do more harm to our mate & us.

Concluding thoughts:

Strong marriages march to a different tune than the average marriage. It is not—“*If you don’t measure up, I will reject you.*” But rather—“*I will accept you—who you are & where you are.*” The greatest blessing you can give someone is—ACCEPTANCE! Jesus’ acceptance has changed the lives of so many on this earth. We were sinners—unworthy of His love. Yet, he loved us—died for us—wants to save us. He is willing to accept us where we are & make us His child. Such acceptance will cause us to want to be the very best we can be and to show our gratitude for His unconditional acceptance.

QUESTIONS IN REVIEW

True or False

- ___ 1. To accept someone means that you agree with everything in their lives.
- ___ 2. "Unconditional acceptance" is to accept my spouse "as is!"
- ___ 3. When we get married, it is hard, at first, for us to really see the other person's faults.
- ___ 4. People's acceptance of one another is general determined by their actions.
- ___ 5. Unconditional acceptance of one's self is basic to extending the same to others.
- ___ 6. It is not possible for a man to love his wife as he loves himself.
- ___ 7. Gratefulness of having a good mate makes it easier to accept him or her.
- ___ 8. We accept someone when they measure up to what we feel they ought to be.
- ___ 9. Acceptance by others is a huge motivation for me to live right.
- ___ 10. God's acceptance is not without the need to make changes on our part.

Lesson Nine

Basic Strengths in Marriage (#5)**Strong Spiritual Lives**

One of the hardest lessons for human beings to learn—“*I am not the center of the universe.*” Those who have studied “Earth Science” remember the name of Copernicus! He advocated a revolutionary thought--that the earth was not the center of the universe. He believed that the Sun does not move around the earth—but the earth around the sun. Another man advocated: “*Each child must experience his or her own ‘Copernican revolution.’*” In other words, “They must learn that they are not the center of their world.” This is a radical adjustment! Each infant has always had its wants met. Why not let things continue that way! Walls should move out of the way before I run into them. Floors should become soft just as I fall on them. Everyone should give me their toys if I want them. The rules of the game should change so I can always win. **But—unfortunately, life does not cooperate—the child is shocked!** What about us adults? Have we been slow in learning this great principle? Do we still have the concept—even in marriage—“What are you doing for me?” Do we still look out for #1’s interests, feelings, and opinions? A strong spiritual life will drastically change this outlook!

Phil. 2:4

We are convinced that **Strong spiritual lives** will help make **Strong marriages!** This can be SEEN—from experience, statistical surveys, Scripture teaching. There is a very strong emphasis in Scripture on **Servanthood**, **Sacrifice**, and **Love**. All three of these reflect a strong spiritual life.

How would you Identify a Strong Spiritual Life? May we suggest the following three concepts:

1. *It is one that learns to trust in God.* It is someone like Abraham (Heb. 11:17-20). He is called the “*Father of the Faithful.*” That is—the Father of the trusting ones. This is more than just believing God exists! It is believing that He is good. (Ps. 100:3-5). It is believing that He cares. (1 Peter 5:7). It is to be able to say like Job: “***Though he slays me, yet will I trust in him.***” (Job 13:15). Until God becomes a personal friend—our religion is more outward. As our religion becomes more and more inward—it becomes strong.
2. *It is one that allows God to be in control.* Ps. 37:5—“***Commit your ways to the Lord, Trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass.***” It is to realize how much I need Him—His direction for my life. It is to realize that I am incapable of directing my life by myself. (Jer. 10:23). Jesus is to be “Lord” in my life. He is to be in control of the direction of my life. “***I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.***” (Gal. 2:20). Paul had turned his life over to God.

3. *It is a one that has die to the old life.* (Matt. 16:24-25). We have to die in order to live. Men naturally want life & resist death. Mankind wants Christianity to be without a cross. We want to live our lives the way we want to. Sinners die to sin & self (Rom. 6:1-2). When we die to self, Christ takes charge.

How does this help to make Strong Marriages?

1. *Selfishness is at the root of all our sin & troubles.* The strong spiritual person has died to selfishness & has become concerned for the interests of others about him. He or She becomes concerned for the interests of their mate. Love ***“does not behave itself rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil.”*** (1 Cor. 13:5). When there has been a misunderstanding or a wrong done—they are the first to initiate the healing process. Their concern is not only for the physical needs, but spiritual needs as well. Of all people—the Christian should want his mate to make it to heaven.
2. *People who are secure make for strong marriages.* Anxieties & worries plagued the weak in faith. The strong are secure in their faith and trust in God’s care (Matt. 6:31-33). They can handle the tribulations of life with God’s assurance & help (Rom. 8:28).
3. *Strong marriages come from good decision making.* Right or wrong moral decisions can make or break a marriage. Drinking, Gambling, Drugs, Dishonesty, Infidelity, etc.--all have played their part in destroying marriages. The willingness to say “NO” to sinful & destructive activities will go a long ways to help strengthen a marriage. (2 Cor. 6:14-18; Heb. 5:11-14). A strong Christian is a mature Christian. He is one that makes good decisions that build relationships—not destroy them.

Concluding thoughts:

The church at Corinth was weak and carnal (1 Cor. 3:1-3). They needed to become strong spiritually—so they could properly deal with the problems in their midst--Envy, strife, division, sexual immorality, marital problems, wrong teachings, etc. ***“For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace*** (Rom. 8:6). The church needed to grow strong in their faith in God. They need to let Jesus truly be Lord in their lives. They needed to die to self—but be alive to God with Him in control. Marriages need this same spiritual maturity in the lives of husbands and wives. We begin as a babe in Christ—but grow to maturity. Have you begun your walk with Christ?

QUESTIONS IN REVIEW

True or False

- 1. Possibly the hardest lesson for humans to learn is that "I am not the center of the universe."
- 2. Selfishness is at the root of all our sin and troubles.
- 3. Strong marriages come from good decision making.
- 4. Each infant starts out as a self-centered person.
- 5. Adults are often slow to learn that they do not always get their way.
- 6. A strong spiritual life is only possible when one dies to self and lets God direct his life.
- 7. Secure people make for bad marriages because they are too cocky.
- 8. The willingness to say "no" goes a long way to help strengthen a marriage.
- 9. A strong Christian makes good decisions that build relationships.
- 10. A person starts as a babe in Christ when he comes into God's family.

Lesson Ten

Conflicts in Marriage

A married couple took two days off for a vacation in the mountains. This was a rare treat for them and the first day went great! The next morning the mood was marvelous and the wife thought—*this would be a good time to talk about some problem areas!* So, she began to give a list of things (complaints and criticisms) that she was unhappy about. They soon began arguing, became angry, and packed up and went home! Is this scene typical of all marriages? Do marriages have to have conflicts? Can these conflicts be lessened in order to have a degree of sweet peace in their home?

There is one fact that a young couple should be told about before they get married—that marriage is not a magical state of bliss that automatically gives happiness each day, but it is a relationship that must be continually worked with and adjustments constantly being made. Conflicts between two people are to be expected and they must be either controlled or resolved in order to have a happy adjusted marriage.

A study was conducted with about 800 couples who claimed to be happy or unhappy. They both had grievances, but the couples that stated they were happy had fewer complaints. Some of complaints were that their spouse was argumentative, critical, not affectionate, nervous, poor housekeeper, nagged, etc. Their arguments were over the children, sex, money, in-laws, religion, use of leisure-time, thoughtlessness, being taken for granted, choice of friends, recreation, respect for conventions, etc. None of these produce conflict automatically. It was their attitudes or personality traits that determined their action or reaction. Such conflicts will continue and grow unless worked on by both.

There are some basic areas of marital conflict that would occur in most marriages. The following will help to illustrate these.

1. Background differences. The very fact that one is a male and the other a female will automatically bring up conflicts because they often react differently, think differently, and deal with situations differently. They are usually brought up differently. Plus, you will have different backgrounds from which the couple comes that affect their thinking and actions. They will in some instances have different ideas and ideals about money, clothes, religion, politics, occupation, recreation, children, food, etc., different opinions about things and people, and different personal habits. A couple's likes and dislikes may be quite different from what they appeared to be while dating.

2. Temperament or Personality differences. One may be more aggressive than the other. One may want to be on the go and the other wants to enjoy a quiet evening at home. Couples are often drawn to their opposite, which may be good, but it can cause conflicts to occur. One may be more mature, while the other is more selfish and self-centered. (We will discuss this more later on).

3. Bringing Tensions Home. Struggles that are faced at work or conflicts with neighbors or friends when brought into the couple's home can be a source of conflict for them to also deal with. There is a tendency to take our strains and stresses out on our mate and often blame them for something that wasn't their trouble to begin with.

4. New roles. Being inexperienced as a husband or wife in making adjustments to another person will certainly face every newly wed. And the less prepared they are for such conflicts, the worse they tend to handle them. This is also clearly seen when the couple faces the new roles as father and mother.

One of the big problems with conflicts is that they can be "bottled up" for a long time; then, when a big conflict comes, they explode with anger and say and do things they regret later. Conflicts do not mean that a marriage will fail or is a failure. A couple does not have to agree on everything in order to live together or be happy. They can disagree and still love each other. So, again, the problem is not so much in disagreeing, but the manner in which such is expressed.

General techniques for solving difficulties. There are some basic things that can be done to help lessen the effects of conflict in marriage.

1. Preventive efforts. Try to see or anticipate conflicts ahead of time and understand the dangers of not dealing with them correctly: unhappiness, loss of peace, damage to children, alienation of husband and wife, separation, or even divorce. If both are Christians, they will look to the Word of God for help.

Matt. 7:12 _____

Matt. 18:1-4 _____

Matt. 5:44 _____

Matt. 7:1-5 _____

Matt. 12:34-37 _____

Matt. 18:6 _____

Matt. 18:15 _____

Rom. 12:9 _____

Rom. 12:17 _____

Rom. 12:19 _____

Rom. 15:1 _____

1 Cor. 6:7 _____

1 Cor. 7:3-5 _____

2. Be willing to change! We may need to change ourselves, our habits, our situations, or our circumstances. We need to be flexible, humble, and searching for those needed changes. We should not resent suggestions and not be too defensive or bull-headed. We need to be willing to see ourselves as others see us. We also need to be more understanding of why people act as they

do and less demanding on immediate or radical change. People also need proper motivation to change. Mates need to be less critical and more optimistic and more positive in their efforts to encourage change. It is very important that men and women accept their God-given roles in life and realize the differences between males and females.

3. Keep conflict on the level of discussion—not quarreling or arguing. It is important to try to work out some guidelines ahead of time so the discussion can be kept on an even keel. There is a need to squarely face up to the issue and stick with it, if possible, to find a solution that both can live with. A problem that is often caused is illustrated in the following little story. *"My wife and I had a terrific fight last night and she became historical!" "Don't you mean hysterical?" "No, I mean historical! She brought up everything I ever did wrong!"* It is also important to be reasonable, logical, understanding, honest and open. Avoid the use of "always" and "never." And sometimes it may be better to just be quiet. Many arguments not only have surface problems, and real underlying problems as well, such as: Lack of love, Touchiness, Fear, Jealousy, Self-centeredness, Impurities, and Lack of sincerity.

4. Greatest need is penitence and forgiveness. Conflicts come that sometime wind up as arguments or quarrels. Things can be said and done that are regretted later. Repentance and true forgiveness is a necessity in order to maintain or mature the marital relationship.

Eph. 4:31-32 _____

Matt. 18:21-22 _____

Concluding thoughts.

Christians should have the best marriages, the best homes, and the best families because they have the greatest of encouragement, the greatest guidance, and the greatest strength. We need to keep studying, learning, growing, maturing, and praying. If we will, our homes will give up great happiness, we will have better adjusted children, and thus have a greater influence in the world about us for the Lord.

QUESTIONS IN REVIEW

True or False

- 1. Absolutes pose a real problem in marital adjustment and success.
- 2. Conflict growing out of religious faith, moral standards, age, or cultural background may prove to be unyielding.
- 3. Adjustments in the marital relationship always implies a compromise on the part of one or both mates.
- 4. Attitudes or personality traits are the reason for conflicts in a marriage.
- 5. The newness of marriage helps the couple to deal with their differences, at first!
- 6. Being willing to change is a necessary part of solving conflicts in marriage.
- 7. Many conflicts can be avoided if the couple will have a mature outlook.
- 8. No marriage will last long without repentance and forgiveness.
- 9. Selfishness is the least likely cause for conflict in a marriage.
- 10. Marriage is a relationship that must be continually worked with and adjustments constantly being made.

Lesson Eleven

Reasons for the Break-up of Marriage

There are four terms that probably need to be clarified in our study on this topic so that we can be sure that we understand each other.

1. Separation—Living separately, but the marriage is not legally dissolved.
1 Cor. 7:10-11 _____
2. Desertion—Where a mate leaves the other with no intentions of continuing the marital relationship.
3. Annulment—Where a ceremony has been conducted and legal papers signed, but there has been no consummation of the marriage. Governmental officials can state that legally the marriage did not take place.
4. Divorce—It is to set free, to liberate from a bond, to dismiss, to repudiate. More specifically, to put away, to divorce from marriage tie. It is the mutual dissolution of the marriage relationship.

Deut. 22:19 _____

Matt. 5:32 _____

Matt. 19:3-9 _____

Legal grounds granted by the States for divorce: The following may not be complete:

1. Adultery
2. Conviction of a felony (after marriage)
3. Habitual drunkenness or drug addiction
4. Cruel and inhuman treatment (extreme cruelty—mental or physical)
5. Desertion
6. Impotency
7. Insanity
8. Non-support
9. Separation for a stated period
10. Voluntary abandonment
11. Marriage void for fraud, force, incapacity to contract, prohibited marriages, etc.
12. Wife pregnant by another at time of marriage
13. Bigamy
14. Gross or willful neglect
15. Physical cruelty and inhuman treatment
16. Mental cruelty and inhuman treatment (indignities)
17. Conviction of a felony before marriage, without knowledge of spouse.
18. Prior divorce in another state by defendant
19. Incompatibility
20. Commission of a crime against nature
21. 21. Attempt on the life of the spouse
22. Vagrancy
23. Joining any religious society which forbids co-habiting.

Divorce brings its evil fruits. It can make children an orphan or having only one parent, and affect their lives in many undesirable ways. A high percentage of delinquents come from broken homes. Divorce helps to make a great amount of criminals. A person will become irreligious or unfaithful to the Lord. He or she will get caught up in sexual immorality. As divorce increases, the moral fiber of our country is gradual being destroyed.

Why such a high rate of divorce in this country?

1. Less and less respect of God and His Law of marriage among the masses.
2. Less disgrace felt as a result of divorce.
3. Pleasure philosophy that so many are adopting.
4. Increased childlessness.
5. Lack of training for marriage and parenthood.
6. High demands and standards desired for married life not being met.
7. Changes in women's role—easier to make a living or go on welfare.
8. More and more emotional immaturity in early marriages.

There are two main reasons suggested by those who have made an intensive study of marriage and divorce: (1) Inability to discuss their problems objectively; and (2) Selfishness—wanting to have their own way. I think that most of can honestly say that most of us bring into marriage a selfish independence. Most problems in marriage stem from this one. Jesus illustrates this in the parable that he told of people being invited to a feast and all of them scrambling for the chief seats—showing a concern for self, and others not considered.

Selfishness! All people face the problem of selfishness because it is a "growing up" process. From the cradle to the grave we have to deal with it. Some refer to this as a conflict between our lower nature and our spiritual nature (works of flesh versus fruit of the Spirit—Gal. 5:15-26). Our carnal or fleshly nature has strong appetites and desires. Our challenge is to modify these desires so they will harmonize with the welfare of others that requires control and discipline. Here is where training becomes important! If a child is not taught and trained, he will become a selfish adult. If trained properly, his appetites and desires will be in control of his spiritual nature. If this selfish indulgence is not checked, it will separate us from God and from human relationships as well. Selfishness is described in the following ways in the Bible:

Isa. 53:6 _____

2 Pet. 2:10 _____

Micah 3:11 _____

Phil. 2:4 _____

2 Cor. 5:15 _____

2 Tim. 3:2 _____

Men want to control their own will, not God! Their lives center on themselves, not others. God is on the outside looking in. Everything centers on what I want, my likes, and my ways. **Jesus died so that He could deliver us from this inner blight of selfishness!**

Selfishness in marriage can be devastating! A man or woman that has this kind of an outlook can easily destroy a relationship—*"I want what I want when I want it, and I'll get it any way I can."*

Prov. 21:9

Prov. 21:19

Prov. 27:15

But look at the husband! Maybe the wife is trying to tell him something that is for his good or the good of the children, etc., but he is so occupied with his own wants he will not listen. But to give in to nagging could be detrimental also. He is reminded of his weakness and hates himself for it. All fighting in the home is saying: *"I want my way and I'll fight for it."* or *"I have my rights and comforts to consider."* Instead of the primary concern is to please one another—it is...to please myself! Each should have the best interest of one another at heart if they want to build a loving relationship. It is suggested that marriage is a box that is full of goodies to be taking out all the time and it will always remain full. But in reality, it is an empty box that is only filled up when each partner puts something into it. Selfish independence will keep the box empty! Jesus' statement shows clearly the problem: ***"He that loves his life shall lose it; and he that hates his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal."*** (Jn. 12:25). Jesus is saying that if we want eternal life, we got to become unselfish! Selfishness must be at the root of divorce!

What can be done to prevent divorce? It is our conviction that only Biblical principles can solve the problems in the home. It is the only source that offers true love, wisdom, maturity, and the ability to go the second mile in forgiveness. May we suggest the following things:

1. **Return to a respect and teaching of the Bible on marriage and the home.** We show our respect for God by listening to what He has to say. God wants us to have a high regard for the sanctity of the home and make it a permanent relationship for life. We should encourage and insist that divorce not even be a consideration. God hates divorce (Mal. 2:16). However, God does allow one reason for divorce (Matt. 19:1-9). Even in this situation, God does not command divorce and wants the two to strive to work through the conflict and remain together. It does call for a great measure of divine love!
2. **Strong teaching of these truths in the community!** Young people need to be taught before they get themselves into bad situations. Marriage is not to be taken lightly, and efforts should be made on the part of both to make it the best they can.
3. **The church to take public action on those who violate God's Law.** Such is commanded in 1 Cor. 5. If wrong relationships are ignored and unreprieved, then how can we teach the world the true concepts of marriage?
4. **To teach that love, forgiveness, and restitution are far better than divorce!** God allowed divorce and remarriage because of the ***"hardness of the people's heart."*** (Matt. 19:8). We can do better! We don't have to divorce. Two people working together with God can remake that relationship!
5. **Use counseling to try to prevent divorce.** You have probably heard of the woman who went to a psychologist to get some advice. She said: *"I intend to divorce him, but I want to hurt him all I can."* The doctor's advice was: *"Start showering him with compliments. Do all the things he likes that make him happy. When you become indispensable to him, and when he thinks you really love him devotedly, then get a divorce. That will really hurt*

him!" After several months she returned to give a report. She had followed his advice. "Good," the Doctor replied. "Now you can start your divorce!" Her reply was: "Divorce! I don't want a divorce, I love my husband!"

Divorce is destroying homes in America. It is not just a legal problem, but primarily it is a spiritual and moral problem. God has the answer and can solve the problems if man will only listen. Let's do what we can to motivate people to build "Christian Homes!"

QUESTIONS IN REVIEW

True or False

1. Children of broken homes are many times more likely to be delinquent.
2. Desertion is called a poor man's divorce.
3. Polygamy was introduced by Methuselah.
4. Failure in marriage is usually the result of a single factor most of the time.
5. Christians cannot justify the breaking up of a marriage on legal grounds.
6. Marriage is only for Christians.
7. There are many legal grounds that states offer to a couple to get a divorce.
8. Divorce brings its evils and sorrows.
9. The main reason for the high divorce rate in this country is a lack of training for marriage.
10. The church should take public action on those who violate God's Law.

Lesson Twelve

Separation, Divorce, and Re-Marriage

The church at Corinth evidently had several important questions about marriage that were sent to the Apostle Paul, or the Holy Spirit knew the situation and inspired Paul to write about it. The 7th Chapter of 1 Corinthians primarily deals with marriage issues. One of the questions that the Apostle dealt with was on whether Christian husbands and wives can "live separate" or not, or must they stay together—no matter what? Beginning with 1 Cor. 7:10, the Holy Spirit directs Paul to state:

The Question of Separation

1 Cor. 7:10 _____

What if she departs or leaves her husband anyway?

1 Cor. 7:11 _____

What if a spouse (man or woman) is an unbeliever, would it be okay to separate or even divorce such?

1 Cor. 7:12-13 _____

What if the unbeliever makes the decision to depart or leave the believer—no longer wanting to remain married to the believer?

1 Cor. 7:15 _____

What are the two reasons given for the believer staying in the married relationship with an unbeliever?

1 Cor. 7:14 _____

1 Cor. 7:16 _____

God does not want a marriage to break up because it is designed for several very important things. Separation or divorce will open the door for more immorality on the part of one or more persons and the children will suffer as a results as well. Marriage is not just for Christians, it is for everyone. God expects everyone to abide by His Law on Marriage! The Apostle Peter also deals with this issue from a positive standpoint:

1 Peter 3:1-7

Reasons not to Divorce

When we view the personal teachings of Christ on marriage during His public ministry and then see the discussion of such in the Letters of Paul and Peter, it would seem that the world has been totally indifferent to what God wants. Jesus said:

Matt. 5:32

Matt. 19:3-9

The teachings of the Apostles do not contradict such:

Rom. 7:1-3

1 Cor. 7:11

1 Cor. 7:12-13

Reasons for not Divorcing:

1. Because God hates divorce. God does not want man to suffer the repercussions of divorce. He knows the evils that can come from such.
2. Because of the Sanctity of marriage. God has sanctified even the marriage of a believer to an unbeliever (1 Cor. 7:13-16). Children born to this relationship are also sanctified.
3. Because God has warned against such. What God joins together no man is to put asunder (Matt. 19:6). Not even governmental officials have the right to make laws allowing such, except for the one reason that Jesus gave.
4. Because of the fruits of divorce. The guilty party (the one who commits fornication) is not allowed to remarry which puts him in a very hard situation. The innocent party (the one who was faithful) can remarry, but has to remake a new relationship; which, with children, is usually not easy. And the bad effects on the children.
5. Because divorce admits failure. The two have failed in one of the greatest and closest relationships in life. Divorce indicates that the two are unwilling or unable to sit down and work out the problems in their marriage.

Remarriage

As a general rule, where people separate, desert, or divorce a mate, they will re-marry. The sexual urge, as well as the need for close companionship, motivates people to seek out another mate. Is this acceptable with God? Since God made us this way with these needs and urges, why shouldn't we be allowed to remarry? If we are not allowed by God to remarry, then

would it be alright for a person to just "live-in" with another person? Does the Bible have anything to say about this?

Scriptural reasons for remarriage: The following Scriptures would indicate that there are acceptable reasons for a person to remarry:

Rom. 7:3; 1 Cor. 7:39 _____

Matt. 19:9 _____

1 Cor. 7:10-11 _____

God wants us not to leave our first husband or wife! (Mal. 2:16). But if we do leave, it would be better not to get a legal divorce. If we get remarried, this cuts off any possibility of reconciliation.

Should a person marry a divorced person? If there is unfaithfulness on the part of a mate and there is no hope of reconciliation; then, it can be logically argued from Jesus' teachings that the innocent party can remarry. However, just how sure can a person be of the unfaithfulness of that person's first mate? The safe course would be not to marry a divorced person, but some are willing to take a chance with this type of a relationship.

Concluding thoughts: God has placed within all of us the desire for sexual relations, as well as, companionship. Marriage is a wonderful union of two into one that can give full satisfaction to both of these needs or desires. However, sin plagues the human race and makes it much harder to make this relationship all that God intended for it to be. Unless people respect God's teaching on marriage, many of those who marry will break up and bring more suffering into our world. The human race can get itself into many situations where decisions are not easy to make because of the complications involved. Christians need to live up to the teachings of Christ and then promote the teaching of these things broadly throughout our world—serving as preventive measures!

QUESTIONS IN REVIEW

True or False

- 1. God permitted divorce under the Law of Moses because of the hardness of men's hearts.
- 2. It is sound reasoning to look upon sexual union among humans as only reproductive in nature.
- 3. If wrong relationships are ignored and unreproved in the church, it does no good to teach people what God says about such.
- 4. God commands married people not to separate.

- 5. Remarriage is allowed by God under certain circumstances.

- 6. Remarriage cuts off any possibility of reconciliation.

- 7. The safe course to follow is not to marry a divorced person.

- 8. The reason why most people who separate or divorce will remarry is purely because of the desire for companionship.
- 9. Divorce is purely an admission of failure.

- 10. Separation or divorce will open the door for more immorality.

