Maximizing Your Marriage

November 13, 1988 · PM · https://letgodbetrue.com/sermons/1988/maximizing-your-marriage-1/

God Commands Us to Maximize Our Marriages, and There Are Many Good Reasons to Do So.

A. God's instructions for wonderful marriages are specific rules for each marriage partner.
   1. When we focus on the whole marriage or on our partner, we neglect our own duties.
   2. Given marriages of two believers, there is no excuse for sorry and failing marriages.

B. A strong, successful marriage is important for several practical and valuable reasons.
   1. Marriage is one of God's great gifts for "under the sun" (Eccl 9:7-10; Prov 18:22).
   2. Being the basic human relationship of authority, all others derive power from it.
   3. Individual potential can only be achieved by utilizing God's means for excellence.
   4. Our spiritual relationship with God will suffer to the extent of marital problems.
   5. We expect our children to wait for marriage, so we should exemplify a good one.
   6. We may reprove our generation's despicable marriages by exemplifying a godly one.
   7. Satan's device at the first was Adam's wife (II Cor 2:11; 11:3). Is it different today?

Marriage Is a Divine Institution, and God Is the Only Authority for Maximizing Its Utility.

A. Books on marital improvement by Christian and secular authors abound without fruit.
   1. "Learning" about marriage increases daily as the knowledge of the truth declines.
   2. Ministers and marriages have all the instruction they need in the inspired Scriptures.

B. The Scriptures are as relevant for marital instruction today as they ever were.
   1. If God designed and ordained marriage, surely He knows best about maintaining it.
   2. What will you do if the Bible contradicts the world's enlightened ideas (Ps 119:128)?
   3. Be ready to have your thoughts about marriage thrown down (Is 55:8-9; II Cor 10:5).

C. There are no cute, simple, neat, innovative rules for maximizing a marriage's potential.
   1. Marriages can be maximized with God's word, a strong desire, hard work, and time.
   2. Scripture gives no advice for counseling apart from pressing God's commandments.
   3. The basic problem is sinful living patterns and rebellion, not ignorance of truth.

D. Ministers cannot compromise or avoid preaching the truth on this subject (Titus 2:15).
   1. Paul commanded Timothy to be instant (pressing) in and out of season (II Tim 4:2).
   2. A faithful minister will preach the same emphasis as found in the word (II Tim 4:2).

The Wife Must Understand and Practice Her Role as the Submissive Helper in Marriage.

A. Women do not like to submit to husbands: they hate it and will rebel against it.
   1. Women that claim to not have a problem submitting are under a deceptive delusion.
      a. They deny their problems inside, and their "desire for submission" is not sincere.
      b. Test your spirit by confessing your faults and praising your husband specifically.
   2. As Satan envied the Most High, women want the glory and freedom of the man.
      a. It is the natural consequence of sin that women despise man's dominion (Jude 8).
      b. They forget God's ordinance, authority's condemnation, and their failure in Eden.
      c. Women control the pulpits today as modern preaching and theology reflects such.
   3. Women complain that men love to glory in submission since they don't have to do it.
      a. It is an ignorant woman that forgets the man's duty and her husband's masters.
      b. The privilege (?) of authority brings responsibility and condemnation (James 3:1).
      c. Men must cheerfully and heartily serve froward masters and oppressive rulers.
      d. Consider how athletes submit to coaches, employees to bosses, citizens to rulers, Secret Service men to Presidents, Mafia bodyguards to Dons, pilots to air traffic controllers, children to parents, members to pastors, sailors to Captains, etc.
   4. Inferiority creates a defensive reaction, suspicion, and a resentment of reminders.
   5. Cholerics will have the most difficulty and Phlegmatics the least with submission.
      a. Cholerics have a natural disposition for ruling, debating, denying, and excusing.
      b. Phlegmatics, while naturally submissive, are uncommunicative and lack initiative.
   6. All women in '88 have more trouble with this point than probably at any other time.
      a. Our present cultural, societal, and family influences contradict God's ordinance.
      b. The woman's choice in marriage, lack of fatherly training, few examples of "holy women," women's suffrage, and crumbling authority promotes rebellious women.
      c. The greatest oppression existing today is brawling women (Isaiah 3:1-4,12,16).
   7. Women that resist the man's authority are resisting the ordinance of God (Ro 13:1-5).
   8. God starts with wives (Eph 5; Col 3; I Pet 3), and He emphasizes their duty more.
   9. Marriage essentially requires the wife's submission: the husbands love is desirable.

B. Scripture abundantly proves this point (Genesis 2:18; 3:16; I Corinthians 11:3-10; 14:34-35; Ephesians 5:22-24,33; Colossians 3:18; I Timothy 2:9-14; Titus 2:5; I Peter 3:1-6).
   1. Adam was created first: Eve was created to serve (Gen 2:18; I Co 11:7-9; I Ti 11-13).
      a. It is a man's world (Gen 2:7-17) even as it is God's universe – for His own glory.
      b. The man is the image and glory of God, and the woman is the glory of the man.
      c. The woman was made for the man; but the man was not made for the woman.
      d. The woman was made to help the man: she must aim to maximize her husband.

e. There is no such thing as a “helpmeet.” Eve was a HELPER suitable for Adam.
f. Observe that this order of position and emphasis existed before Eve’s terrible sin.
g. The man did not come by way of the woman, but the woman did come from man.
h. The woman is to be silent with all subjection under the man, as saith the law.
i. Marriage is an obligation to give, and women give up their desires in submission.
j. Submission is giving up yourself to your husband for his pleasure and service.
    1. It is an absolute determination to do everything he could possible desire.
    2. It is a conscience effort to always think about what he needs and wants.

2. The man must rule over his wife; her desires must be his desires (Gen 3:16; I Ti 2:14).
    a. Abel’s desire was subservient to Cain’s, and Cain ruled over him (Genesis 4:7).
    b. A man is called by God to rule over the weakness and foolishness of his wife.
    c. Observe that this aggravation of the woman’s position occurred due to the Fall.
    d. Regardless of your personal respect for him, your husband is more important.
    e. You do not have a right to equality in spending, free time, trips, clothing, etc.
3. God is the Head of Christ, Christ the Head of Man, and Man the Head of Woman.
    a. Christ always pleased His Head (John 6:38; 8:29), so wives ought to please theirs.
    b. Wives are to submit as unto the Lord and as the church submits itself to Christ.
    c. Husbands had the full authority to disallow a wife’s vow to God (Numbers 30).
    d. Servants that serve their masters well are actually serving Christ (Col 3:22-24).
4. Wives are commanded by God to submit to their husbands in everything (Eph 5:24).
    A. Children and servants are to obey their rulers in all things (Col 3:20,22; Tit 2:9).
    B. Wives may not select things they think reasonable, moderate, convenient, tasteful, appropriate, profitable, enjoyable, easy, wise, timely, etc. in which to submit.
    C. The real test is in times of adversity – when the children are involved, he has made a mistake, you are not feeling the best, he is failing his duties, etc.
    D. Peter’s commandment to women with unsaved husbands is extremely powerful.
    E. “But if I submit like that, he’ll run all over me,” admits no love and/or fear.
    F. “But I have to stand up for my rights,” shows rebellion. Should children do so?
    G. It takes two to fight. Women that submit pacify marital conflict (Eccl 10:4).
    H. It’s amazing to hear women complain about fetching things, dress standards, meal preparation, children’s rules, work activities, spent monies, weight, hair, etc.
    I. Some will complain, “But you don’t have to sleep with him.” Is God impressed?
    J. Vashti exemplifies a woman that didn’t submit in everything (Esther 1:10-22).
    K. Resist the deceptive excuse of one night excursions that cover daily rebellion.
5. Submission without the right attitude is not submission that is pleasing to God.
    a. God commands servants to serve masters as wives should husbands (Col 3:22-24).

1. Eye service to please him is not good enough; your heart must be single.
2. You must serve him heartily – that is with zeal, passion, initiative, etc.
3. "But I did what he wanted, didn't I?" is an evil definition of submission.
4. Women become masters at faking it in public; but this is not submission.

b. God rejects proper service without joyfulness and gladness of heart (Deut 28:47).
c. Passive rebellion is still rebellion; answering again makes obedience sin (Tit 2:9).
d. A contentious woman that nags is quite terrible (Pr 19:13; 21:9,19; 25:24; 27:15).
e. Solomon called evil women more bitter than death and most dreadful (Ec 7:26).
f. God condemns irreverence (De 27:16), faces (Pr 30:17), and thoughts (Ec 10:20).
g. We spank children for pouting, head tossing, debating, slamming doors, yelling, joking, complaining, nagging, ignoring, avoiding, stomping, crying, etc.
h. Children that only respond to screaming and repetition are considered rebellious.
i. It is the meek and quiet spirit that is of great price in God's sight (I Pet 3:4).
j. Wise women will recognize that cheerful service brings honour (Prov 27:18).
    1. The right attitude is often reflected in initiative to submit without asking.
    2. If your submission has earned no rewards, check its quality and your attitude.

6. Wives are commanded to reverence their husbands as Sarah called Abraham lord.
    a. Consider that Sarah did not use this title for public deference (Genesis 18:12).
    b. Reverence is not icing on the cake of submission; it is an ingredient of the cake.
    c. David was reverenced by Abigail (I Sam 25:39-42) and Bathsheba (I Kgs 1:11-31).
    d. Some say, "I can't submit when I don't respect him." Lack of respect is a sin.
    e. Husbands do not have to earn your respect to get submission; God demands both.
    f. Wives want the reverence from their children, but they seldom give it (Heb 12:9).
    g. Do you treat him like a god? Do you praise him? Are you humble with him?
    h. Husbands are to be feared (I Pet 3:1-6). Today's familiarity destroys any fear.
7. Submission is not modified in any way by the ability or character of your husband.
    a. Peter compares wives to servants and makes the point very clear (I Pet 2:18-20).
        1. Submitting to an imperfect husband for the Lord's sake shows a good woman.
        2. In the chapter following, Peter teaches full submission to unconverted men.
        3. Submitting to your husband "as unto the Lord" (Eph 5:22) is doing it to Him.
        4. "It would be easier if my husband . . ." is an excuse for pride and rebellion.
    b. Proverbs speaks often of cantankerous women but nothing of oppressive husbands.
    c. You may be more able than your husband in some ways, but you are still weaker.
        1. Women are not so much the weaker vessels by intellect as by character.
        2. Women who understand will respect and admire a man's perspective on things.
        3. The king is not usually the smartest man in the land but is still obeyed.

d. If your husband is obnoxious, smother him with kindness (Pr 16:14; Rom 12:19-21).

8. The very practical issue of long hair reflects the woman's submission to the man.
   a. Long hair on a woman is a sign of her being under authority (I Cor 11:10-16).
   b. Long hair is glorious to the woman, as the woman herself is glorious to the man.
   c. When men wear long hair it is a shame to them – they are obviously effeminate.
   d. Consider the difference in appearance of a Doberman and an English Sheepdog.
9. The woman is not to submit so far that she loses conscience and sins (I Peter 3:6).
   a. All spheres of human authority have the clear limitation of God's authority.
   b. Abigail was a good woman who knew when to disregard her husband (I Sam 25).
   c. Paul modifies a woman's submission to that which is "fit in the Lord" (Col 3:18).
10. Paul was not a male chauvinist pig who hated women – God inspired scripture.

C. Submission is the woman's voluntary responsibility; her husband cannot properly create it.
   1. All authority structures among men require an active ruler and active subjects.
      a. Paul exhorts church members to obey them that have the rule (Hebrews 13:17).
      b. God made David King of Israel, but Israel also made him King (II Samuel 5:1-3).
      c. Though submission to a husband is voluntary, its importance is not reduced at all.
      d. Modern wives choose their husbands from all the men – what is the big problem?
      e. After the mutual assent, husbands may enforce it and increase their demands.
   2. Fear of insubordination by those under authority is a most crippling situation.
   3. Submission and ruling are like the opposite sides of a self-pumping merry-go-round.
      a. A woman cheerfully and completely submitting will receive more consideration.
      b. A husband tenderly and kindly ruling will receive more devoted submission.
   4. There are rewards for a woman submitting in marriage as there is in all submission.
      a. A good woman will be exalted and rewarded by husband and children (Pr 31:28).
      b. A good woman will be rewarded by God for serving Him in submission (Col 3:24).

D. Getting started is more an instant act of the will than a gradual change in conduct.
   1. By the fear of God, admit absolutely that God demands it. Submission requires faith.
   2. Thank God for the man that He has given you and make him the center of your life.
   3. Confess to God and your husband your rebellion and state your desire to serve well.
      a. Action and words go together – one without the other is not adequate for faith.
      b. Men love the verbal reverence and affection of their wives. Why deny him?

E. Seek and encourage relationships with other women that will promote submissive wives.
   1. Get angry and rebuke sharply any woman that criticizes her husband or submission.
   2. Encourage one another to joyfully, actively, and fully submit to their own husbands.
   3. Confess your faults one to another in a repentant spirit, and pray for each other.

4. Take pains to train your daughters and the young women to submit to their husbands.
5. The father-daughter relationship is very close to the marital relationship.
6. Women teaching other women aggressively and scripturally is powerful (Titus 2:5).
7. Understand that relationships with 99% of this world's women will corrupt you.

The Husband Must Understand and Practice His Role as the Loving Ruler in Marriage.

A. The husband is to rule his wife in love – one requirement cannot exclude the other.
   1. A husband must first be a ruler and leader; he must then love and provide for her.
      a. Love is the modifying aspect of godly husbands, but authority is the basic aspect.
      b. Ruling is far more needful for men today than is love, patience, comfort, etc.
      c. The greatest frustration for women today is the lack of strong male leadership.
      d. Men crave and love strong leaders, but women need and desire them even more.
      e. Maximizing a marriage requires the husband to first establish his leadership.
      f. Asserting proper leadership will bless the marriage and all spheres of authority.
   2. God initially made the woman for the man, but the Fall increased the rule (Ge 3:16).
      a. It is a man's world (Gen 2:15-18), and the woman is for his glory (I Cor 11:7).
      b. The order of creation placed the man over the woman (I Cor 11:9; I Tim 2:13).
      c. The Fall manifested the woman's weakness (I Tim 2:14; II Tim 3:6; I Pet 3:7).
   3. Men are to command and lead their houses to obey the Lord (Gen 18:19; Josh 24:15).
      a. Husbands have authority over the personal vows of wives to the Lord (Num 30).
      b. Job corrected the foolish notions of his wife and instructed her (Job 2:9-10).
      c. If women want to learn anything, they must ask their husbands (I Cor 14:34-35).
      d. Ministers are to be examples of ruling their own houses well (I Timothy 3:4-5,12).
   4. Jesus rules over the Church to make it all that He desires (Eph 5:25-27; He 12:5-11).

B. The nature of authority and submission does not leave those in authority entirely free.
   1. Authority is to benefit those submitting (Rom 13:3-4; II Co 10:8; 13:10; I Pe 2:12-14).
   2. Those in authority are warned against selfish personal ambition (Titus 1:7; I Pet 5:3).
   3. Husbands have duties which can free women (Ex 21:10-11; Mark 10:12; I Cor 7:15).
   4. The woman needs a husband as evidenced by Paul's plain statement (I Cor 11:11).
   5. Kings are established and preserved by righteousness (Pr 20:28; 29:4,14; II Sam 23:3).
   6. Fathers are infinitely higher than children, but they are yet responsible (Eph 6:4).
   7. God assumes that men in marriage will spend time pleasing their wives (I Cor 7:33).

C. The abuse of authority by oppressing and provoking those in submission is a great evil.
   1. A king against whom there is no rising up is indeed a glorious thing (Prov 30:29-31).

2. But a king that lacks understanding of authority is a great oppressor (Prov 28:16).
3. There should be pity and comfort for those under oppressive leaders (Eccl 4:1).
4. Paul warns fathers against oppressive leadership that discourages children (Col 3:21).

D. Wisdom in authority recognizes the proper time and degree of appropriate compromise.
1. Every husband has compromised somewhere, so this point should not unduly shock.
2. The voluntary and mutual assent of authority and submission must be understood.
   a. God made David King, but Israel also made David King by consent (II Sam 5:1-3).
      1. Israel made David King with a "league" or covenant: marriage is very similar.
      2. Marriage covenants are formal public compacts of authority and submission.
   b. All governments are popular: a government practically exists by the people's will.
      1. When a government is not popular, those in submission will overthrow it.
      2. Masters have authority over servants, but employees have the right to quit.
      3. The ordinance of God is the only proper basis on which to base authority.
   c. God ordained the husband's position, wives submit to it, and husbands enforce it.
3. Rehoboam abused his authority and lost most of the tribes of Israel (I Kings 12:1-16).
   a. Note that the nation willingly desired to make Rehoboam King over them (12:1).
   b. Solomon was hard on the people: some relief would have bought loyalty (12:3-7).
   c. He treated them roughly without relief, so they rebelled against him (12:8-16).
4. David recognized the importance of consulting and requesting service (I Chron 13:1-4).
5. Note how Absalom abused this principle of compromise to steal Israel (II Sam 15:3-6).
6. Wives submit better with a husband's kindness: husbands are kinder with submission.
   a. Men know that kindness from masters promotes service: but wives seldom see it.
   b. Men understand the nature of seduction, but they seldom practice it with wives.
   c. Delicate treatment of a servant will yield a son at the last (Proverbs 29:21).

E. Husbands are to love their wives in the manner and to the degree Christ loves His bride.
1. Paul emphasizes love as a main duty of husbands in marriage (Eph 5:22-33; Col 3:19).
2. Wives are companions for men (Gen 2:18; Pr 2:17; Mal 2:14), not slaves or doormats.
3. Love is . . . the sacrificial desire resulting in action for the welfare of another.
4. Paul defines love very specifically in the great chapter on charity (I Cor 13:4-7).
   a. Love suffers long. It will tolerate much and still love (Prov 10:12; 17:9; 19:11).
   b. Love is kind. It sees others in a gentle, sympathetic, benevolent way (Pr 19:22).
   c. Love does not envy. It does not resent others because of advantage (Prov 27:4).
   d. Love does not vaunt itself. It sees to emphasize others (Pr 13:10; Phil 2:1-4).
   e. Love is not puffed up. It does not think too highly of self (I Cor 4:6; 5:2; 8:1).
   f. Love does not behave itself unseemly. It uses good behavior (Phil 4:8; Col 3:19).
   g. Love seeks not her own. It sacrifices itself (I Cor 10:24,33; Ro 15:2; Eph 5:25).

h. Love is not easily provoked. It tolerates a lot before acting (Ja 1:19; Pr 14:17).
i. Love thinks no evil. It rejects suspicion and believes the best (I Timothy 6:4).
j. Love does not rejoice in iniquity. It grieves over sin (Lev 19:17-18; Ps 119:136).
k. Love rejoices in the truth. It desires truth as the goal (III John 3-4; Jas 3:17).
l. Love bears all things. It desires to help and support (Rom 15:1-2; Gal 6:2).
m. Love believeth all things. It always assumes the best construction (I Cor 11:18).
n. Love hopeth all things. Even when evidence mounts, it still hopes (Philemon 21).
o. Love endureth all things. It is not affected and provoked by evil (I Cor 13:4).

5. Love is giving. God loved by giving (John 3:16), and so did Jesus Christ (Eph 5:25).
   a. Love today is mostly getting: love is a feeling for something that satisfies self.
   b. Husbands love their wives by giving time, affection, money, liberty, effort, etc.
   c. True love seeks to give what the other needs, not what is easy and convenient.
6. However, love must also be defined by what it is not in order to limit extremes.
   a. Love may include feelings (SS 2:5), but they are not essential (I Cor 13:7).
   b. Love does not compromise God-ordained authority by subverting appointed roles.
      1. A mother's love for children (Tit 2:5) cannot compromise discipline (De 21:13).
      2. God's love of His people does not mean He submits and serves them as gods.
      3. God does not require a husband to blindly love his wife to a role over him.
   c. Love does not compromise God-ordained condemnation of wickedness and iniquity.
      1. A mother's love for her children may be restrained when they pursue evil.
      2. God's love is limited by His holiness – He cannot compromise His justice.
      3. God does not require a husband to love his wife when she sins against him.
      4. Unconditional love is a Satanic concept – even God's love is all conditional.
      5. God's universal love promotes existentialism which spawned popular self-love.

F. Husbands are to love their wives as they nourish and cherish their bodies (Ep 5:28-29,33).
   1. Men do not need instruction or persuasion to love their bodies: it is a natural fact.
   2. Nourish. To supply with whatever is necessary to promote or maintain its growth.
      a. Consider its scriptural usage (Ruth 4:15; II Sam 12:3; Is 1:2; Dan 1:5; James 5:5).
      b. Men take pains to secure everything necessary and desirable for their bodies.
      c. Does your wife have adequate time, money, rest, recreation, tools, diversion, clothing, stimulation, and education to be all that God intended her to be?
      d. Are you worried that a big raise would spoil you? Be as charitable of your wife.
   3. Cherish. To hold dear, treat with tenderness and affection; to make much of.
      a. Consider the limited occurrences in scripture (I Kings 1:1-4; I Thessalonians 2:7).
      b. Men glory in their bodies, treat them delicately, and pamper them with goodness.
      c. Do you glory in your wife? esteem her highly? treat her tenderly? show her much affection?

make a big deal over her? give her the verbal love she needs?

d. The Law required a year to cheer up wives (De 24:5), should we do so often?

G. Loving your wife properly is not wasted effort – it is loving yourself (Eph 5:28).
   1. Your wife was created for you: but are you making her all that she can be for you?
   2. Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it FOR HIMSELF (Ephesians 5:25-27).
   3. Men are to "so" love their wives "even as Christ loved the church": for themselves.
   4. The law for men: honouring your wife will bring greater devotion, not rebellion.
   5. Men should treat their wives as they wish their masters would treat them on the job.

H. There are both scriptural and logical limitations on the husband's giving love for his wife.
   1. It is a man's world under God (Genesis 2:15; I Corinthians 11:3,7-8; I Timothy 2:12).
   2. The woman was made for the man: the man was not made for the woman (I Co 11:9).
   3. The woman's desires are to be subservient to the husband's desires (Genesis 3:16).
   4. Marriage is not a partnership arranged for the equal and mutual benefits of both.
   5. Sacrificial love for wives clearly cannot subvert this order in creation and the Fall.
   6. Excessive sacrifice that is self-defeating is obviously not intended here by Paul.
   7. Should a husband pay for child care to let his wife play all day? should he cancel his hunting trip to accompany her to a fashion show? should he be a househusband so she can pursue a full-time career? should he sell his rifles to buy her twenty pairs of shoes? should he sell his Fleetwood because she likes little cars?
   8. Adultery and desertion, that justify divorce, cancel the husband's love obligation.
   9. Christ loved the church, not to exalt the church above Himself, but for His own Self.
   10. We never expect Christ to permanently sacrifice His own glory for our own benefit.
   11. Paul has just told the wives they are to submit to their husbands in everything.
   12. If husbands always gave sacrificially, there would be no need for wives to submit.
   13. Men should love their wives to maximize their contribution to themselves in marriage.
   14. Rehoboam should have compromised only a little to have had the kingdom for himself.
   15. The object here is to save men's consciences from an unscriptural burden to wives.

I. Both scripture and logic require that the wife's submission precede the husband's love.
   1. The woman was created for the man: her submission is without limitation by the man.
   2. The man was not created for the woman: his love is limited by submissive service.
   3. Note again the apostles address the woman first (Eph 5:22; Col 3:18; I Peter 3:1-6).
   4. Marriage can exist without the husband's love but not without the wife's obedience.

J. Taking this principle to an excess and oppressing your wife makes you another Rehoboam.
   1. God has designed human relations to require great wisdom in their right management.
   2. Fathers must command and enforce child obedience, yet they cannot discourage them.
   3. Men are to have dominion over the beasts, but even they deserve mercy (Prov 12:10).

4. Loving as Christ loved means (1) sacrificial giving and (2) a limit implied by purpose.

K. Husbands are commanded to know and remember the abilities of their wives (I Peter 3:7).
   1. Your life with your wife must be based on knowledge – don't be stupid about women.
      a. Men and women are different – women do not think and act the same as men.
         1. God made men for ruling and action; women were made for submissive help.
         2. Men need lots of accomplishment; women need verbal praise and recognition.
      b. Do you know the value of verbal reassurance for your wife to realize fulfillment?
      c. Do you know the value of emotional comfort for her to feel loved and secure?
      d. Do you know the value of verbal intimacy for her to be truly satisfied sexually?
      e. Do you know her temperamental makeup and show her some mercy accordingly?
      f. Do you know her daily responsibilities, tribulations, troubles, and problems?
      g. Consider "A man's work is from sun to sun, but a woman's work is never done."
   2. The Lord knows us and remembers our frame (Ps 103:13-14). And you better be glad!
   3. Your wife is to be honoured – she deserves a degree of respect and consideration.
      a. She is a weaker vessel – not your match physically, mentally, emotionally, etc.
      b. She is an heir with you of the grace of life – she is not inferior in Christ.
      c. Delicate treatment of a servant will result in a son at the length (Prov 29:21).
   4. Forgetting this rule and harboring bitterness (Col 3:19) will defeat your prayers.
      a. Husbands must strictly guard against ridicule, excessive demands, punishment, etc.
      b. Remember that weakness usually creates insecurity and defensiveness (Pro 18:23).
      c. Consider her vulnerability to your oppression, and comfort her (Ecclesiastes 4:1).
      d. Her failures to measure up and short-term quitting may be fatigue, not rebellion.
   5. Understanding makes the difference between oppression and benevolence (Prov 28:16).

L. A wise husband will recognize that an investment in his wife is investing in himself.
   1. If the woman was made to help the man, then wise men will maximize their helpers.
   2. Managers that nourish their inferiors and delegate work progress fastest and farthest.
   3. Faith is fully persuaded with evidence that wives are essential to maximize husbands.

M. By knowing their temperaments, men can defeat their weaknesses and be great husbands.
   1. The Choleric husband is too demanding, prone to anger, and emotionally insensitive.
   2. The Melancholy husband is often too critical and negative and has wild mood swings.
   3. The Sanguine husband is usually too superficial and distracted by other things.
   4. The Phlegmatic husband is usually too uncommunicative and not decision oriented.

N. Getting started is more an instant act of the will than a gradual change in conduct.
   1. If you believe the scriptures, then acknowledge that God is absolutely right here.
   2. Thank God for the woman He gave you (remember, you chose her), and build her up.

3. Confess to God and your wife any lack of patience, tenderness, communication, etc.
    a. Remember that your wife receives reassurance for living from your verbal praise.
    b. Your wife craves public and private affection and praise. Love her, and give it.
    c. She may not respond immediately, because you have hardened her against you.
4. Lead her, teach her, defend her, praise her, honour her, talk to her, and love her.

Several Myths Regarding Marriage Must Be Refuted to Properly Maximize Our Marriages.

MYTH 1: FEELINGS, LOVE, AND RESPECT ARE PREREQUISITES FOR MARRIAGE.

A. This myth may be worded, “I don’t love her anymore,” “I never really loved him when we got married,” “I just don’t feel right about him,” “I don’t have any feelings for her like I used to,” “I don’t have any respect for him,” “I still have strong feelings for another woman,” “The old fire is just not there anymore,” “She has hurt me so much I cannot love her,” or “I still love so and so.”

B. This popular myth is based on the predominantly American fantasy of romantic love.
    1. In the Bible, parents arranged marriages without feelings. Was divorce popular?
    2. Consider Genesis 21:21; 24:2-4,50-52; 28:1; 29:23-26; 38:11; Ex 21:7-11; 22:16-17; Numbers 30:3-5; Deuteronomy 25:5-10; Judges 21:20-21; I Corinthians 7:36-38.
    3. Most of the world’s population still practices this method to some degree.
    4. Americans promote girls choosing husbands by infatuation. Is divorce popular?
    5. Consider the “perfect family” with Susie dating many boys, discarding them by feelings, telling Daddy what to do, and marrying the one she thinks she “loves.”
    6. The frivolous attitude toward marriage reflects the immaturity of romantic love.
    7. The record speaks for itself – voluntary romantic love does not make marriages.
    8. Yet to most, even considering marriage without it is rank heresy or stupidity.
    9. The lack of the fear of God, ignorance of scripture, and little commitment to duty makes scriptural practices seem impossible in this infantile generation.
    10. “Extreme” preaching (1) condemns worldly excess and (2) presents God’s emphasis.

C. Romantic love is emotional feelings of attraction and desire for a source of pleasure.
    1. What is popularly called “love” today is actually not much more than “lust.”
    2. Such “love” desires motorcycles, guns, clothes, animals, jobs, men, other women.
    3. Jacob loved Rachel (Gen 29:15-20), and Samson loved a Philistine (Judges 14:1-3).
    4. Scriptural love is active and under our control, not passive and out of control.
    5. Godly love is work – it requires a price – learning, effort, time, sacrifice, etc.

D. God does not condemn feelings; but they cannot become the focal point of marriage.
    1. Bowels of affection are not evil (Gen 43:30; I Kings 3:26; S.S. 5:4; Jer 31:20).

2. Solomon describes love as emotional feelings (S.S. 1:2-4; 2:2,5; 5:8; 7:6; 8:6-7).
3. Paul commanded the saints to have affection for each other (Ro 12:10; Co 3:12).
4. Feelings can be extremely deceptive, if not kept subordinate (II Samuel 13:1-15).
5. The heart of man is not to be trusted (Jer 17:9; Pro 12:26; 14:12; 16:2,25; 21:2).
6. The feelings "feel" great, but they often lead us to wrong action (I Kings 1:6).
7. Strong attraction for another is great, but it is little help for full obedience.

E. The first great error made with this myth is that marriage requires these feelings.
1. The love required in marriage is sacrificial action regardless of any feelings.
2. Love that makes marriages is self-initiated giving that must precede feelings.
3. If actions in marriage are based on feelings, the marriage will surely not last.
4. Marriage requires acts of love, not feelings of love: true love is right action.
5. Truth should be the basis for action, and action should be the basis for feelings.
6. Most of the actions God requires in marriage will not find support in feelings.

F. The second great error made with this myth is that such feelings cannot be created.
1. Investing yourself in another will bring feelings, especially as you pray for them.
2. Our hearts – the seat of affection – will follow our treasures (Matthew 6:21).
3. We are commanded to be actively ravished with our wives' love (Proverbs 5:19).
    a. This ravishing is to follow the command to be satisfied with her breasts.
    b. Ravish. To transport with the strength of some feeling, to carry away with rapture; to fill with ecstasy or delight; to entrance.
    c. It is used this way in S.S. 4:9; but contrast its use with women (Is 13:16).
4. While we feel more attracted to some, we have probably invested more in them.

MYTH 2: COMPATIBILITY IS ESSENTIAL FOR A MARRIAGE TO BE SUCCESSFUL.

A. This myth confuses proper marital criteria and excuses marital failures later.
1. Compatibility has become the major consideration in marriage and divorce today.
2. The practical reality is that hardly anyone actually marries for compatibility.
3. Compatibility needs intimate knowledge and proving: modern dating does neither.
4. Taken to its extreme, compatibility is proved by living together before marriage.
5. Compatibility is totally irrelevant for divorce: only adultery and desertion work.

B. It is impossible for sinners to be compatible in any meaningful way (Romans 1:28-32; 3:9-18; Galatians 5:19-22; Ephesians 2:1-3; II Timothy 3:1-4; Titus 3:3; I John 4:7-12).
1. Sinners may appear to be compatible as they bait each other for their own ends.
2. The natural disposition of man without faith is unreasonable selfishness and pride.

C. Compatibility is something that two people must work at the rest of their lives.
    1. It requires giving what the other needs – usually not what you want to give.
    2. It requires a higher authority outside the marriage to cause constant adjustment.
    3. Compatibility is not basic to marriage; the fear of God and true love surely is.
    4. Basic natural compatibility is nice, but it accomplishes little securing a marriage.
    5. How much compatibility do we choose with parents, masters, rulers, and pastors?
    6. A husband and wife committed to godliness are capable of perfect compatibility.

D. What aspects of compatibility are important? age? food preferences? Parental training? sports on television? hobbies? religion? sexual preferences? Economic background? temperament? care of dirty clothes? relation to in-laws? hygiene?

E. God requires marriage "in the Lord" (I Cor 11:11) but is silent regarding tastes.

F. Why is the phrase "opposites attract" used regarding marriage? What does it mean?

G. Two Christians truly fearing God can have a great marriage though incompatible.
    1. The fear of God (Prov 31:30) is far more important than any social measurement.
    2. Adding sound teaching, a concerned pastor, and open relationships guarantees it.
    3. Younger marriages allow greater compatibility by learning and growing together.

MYTH #3: MARRIAGE WAS INSTITUTED FOR A FAMILY AND CHILDREN.

A. This "noble" myth tries to make marriage a sacrificial union for family benefits.
    1. Women are particularly susceptible to emphasizing the family over the marriage.
    2. Such thinking leads to believing sexual relations are primarily for reproduction.
    3. God created sex for pleasure (Ge 2:25; Pr 5:19; Ro 1:27; I Cor 7:1-6; Heb 13:4).

B. God ordained marriage for man's benefit by the woman: He did not create children.
    1. A man and a woman must leave their family to cleave to each other (Gen 2:24).
    2. The woman was made primarily for the man, not children (Gen 2:18; I Cor 11:9).
    3. Men are to live joyfully with their wives in this world, not children (Eccl 9:9).

C. A godly seed needs a proper marriage (Mal 2:15; I Cor 7:14), but that does not prove marriage was made for the godly seed. God ordained marriage for man and his wife.

D. The husband and wife relationship must always receive supreme priority and emphasis.

MYTH #4: MARRIAGE IS A HOLY AND SACRED UNION FOR ETERNITY.

A. This myth is greatly promoted in the Roman Catholic sacrament of holy matrimony.
    1. Rome is very subtle to buy the souls of women and promote very large families.
    2. Christ and the church illustrate a proper marriage; but they are not the same.
    3. Most of the traditions and trappings of "church weddings" comes from Rome.

4. Jesus attended a marriage, but the only part He had was in the reception.

B. When a couple emphasizes an imaginary spiritual relationship, they miss the practical.
   1. A wife believing this myth can more easily excuse her lack of personal service.
   2. Such a concept can also lead to "God has one specific person in mind for you."
   3. Marriage problems occur in practical duties, not in spiritual never-never land.
   4. Marriage is sweat, work, patience, sex, communication, humility, obedience, etc.

C. When a couple emphasizes an imaginary spiritual relationship, they will deny divorce.
   1. Assuming a spiritual union, Catholics maintain "Christian" marriage as indissoluble.
   2. The trend toward "Christian" fanaticism regarding divorce reflects this myth.

D. Marriage is primarily for companionship for the man (Gen 2:18; Eccl 9:9; Mal 2:14).
   1. Marriage is a practical union of time, not of eternity or heaven (Matthew 22:30).
   2. Families bring physical benefits, businesses economic benefits; governments civil benefits; churches spiritual benefits, and marriage sexual and emotional benefits.

E. The purpose of marriage and its practical ramifications must always be emphasized.

MYTH #5: I WOULD DO BETTER IF MY HUSBAND (WIFE) WOULD CHANGE.

A. As Adam and Eve in Eden, men love to shift the blame to others (Genesis 3:12-13).
   1. Listening to one side of a marital conflict usually leads to ignorant confusion.
   2. If you must hear one side of a marriage, limit it to that person's shortcomings.

B. Men can love wives into submission, and women serve their husbands into love.

C. If a man will not "do better" for God and His word, he will not if others change.

D. Consider that true obedience in relationships is shown best when they do not change.
   1. God requires faithful service to froward masters and husbands (I Pet 2:18-20; 3:1).
   2. God makes specific illustration of unconverted husbands (I Cor 7:13; I Pet 3:1-6).

E. Instead of withholding obedience until they change, change them by your obedience.

F. Are you in a hostile marriage? Consider your ways! Do they please God (Pro 16:7)?

MYTH #6: IT IS TOO LATE AND SERIOUS TO EXPECT IT TO BE GREAT.

A. Some say, "I cannot change my habits this late in life," "If you only knew the affect my childhood has had on me," "You do not understand the pain and resentment that has built up," or "But I can't help the temperament God gave me."

B. Sometimes this myth is due to ignorance of the problems all other marriages have.
   1. Confession of faults often has the greater blessing on those hearing (James 5:16).
   2. As in scripture (Rom 15:4), it is comforting to hear others' problems (I Co 10:13).

3. Consider poor Bathsheba? adultery? murder of her husband? death of a baby?

C. With the help of Jesus Christ, we can do all things easily (Phil 4:13; Matthew 11:30).

MYTH #7: WE NEED TO SEPARATE FOR A WHILE TO WORK THINGS OUT.

A. The world thinks that separation will help bring two angry people closer together.
   A. If "absence makes the heart grow fonder," then couples ought to separate often.
   B. Separation usually has the opposite effect – any love or dependence is destroyed.

B. Christians often justify couples separating by misunderstanding I Corinthians 7:10-11.
   1. These verses deal with marriages where both are converted. Compare I Cor 7:12-13.
   2. Jesus dealt with one-religion marriages, but He did not deal with mixed ones.
      a. Note how Paul acknowledges Christ's agreement and silence in the two cases.
      b. When Jesus preached to Jews, it was very difficult to have mixed marriages.
   3. Both Jesus and Paul commanded husbands and wives not to break their marriage.
      a. Jesus taught that men should not put asunder what God hath joined together.
      b. Jesus taught that divorce causes the other party to commit adultery.
      c. If marriage is a covenant (which it is), how do you justify covenantbreaking?
      d. If denying due benevolence is defrauding (which it is), how do you justify it?
      e. Paul plainly declares here, "Let NOT the wife depart from her husband."
   4. If separation does occur, Paul warns strongly against any additional marriage.
      a. Marriage to a second party rules out reconciliation to the first (Deut 24:1-4).
      b. The first sin can be covered and forgotten; the second sin is irreversible.
      c. A private separation could be covered easily, and a public one with one year.
   5. The action considered here is divorce – "let not the husband put away his wife."
      a. The Bible does not know of "separation" short of or different from divorce.
      b. When a man takes a wife, they must cleave together as one flesh (Gen 2:24).
      c. Observe that the woman is unmarried – "let her remain unmarried or be…."

MYTH #8: OUR LITTLE PROBLEMS CAN BE CURED WITH A LITTLE TIME.

A. Problems buried will seethe and grow in proportion and severity – they will not heal.
   1. Scripture warns of leaven (I Co 5:6), a canker (II Ti 2:17), and a root (He 12:15).
   2. It is far better to end strife now than to let it begin and continue (Prov 17:14).
   3. Unresolved problems will (1) aggravate small differences and (2) grow worse.

B. Time does not accomplish much but to make us older. Good marriages require work.

C. While time is important in changing patterns of conduct, time is often a lame excuse.

MYTH #9: WE REALLY NEED TO WORK OUR PROBLEMS OUT OURSELVES.

A. This myth springs from human pride that refuses to let others see their failures.

B. It is plainly unscriptural to think a couple can work out their problems themselves.
   1. God provides safety in many counselors (Prov 12:15; 15:22; 20:18; 11:14; 24:6).
   2. God expects saints help each other (Ro 15:1-2,14; I The 5:14; He 3:13; 10:24-25).
   3. Society has four benefits – one of which is to pick each other up (Eccl 4:9-12).
   4. God has commanded that we should confess our faults to one another (Jas 5:16).

C. Another concerned godly couple is a great advantage to solving marital problems.
   1. Most listen more readily to a third party of the same sex than their own spouse.
   2. Other couples can quickly confirm certain behavioral tendencies to be normal.
   3. Others can provide outside pressure and reminders of the changes to be made.

Several Rules and Suggestions Should Be Considered and Followed to Maximize Marriage.

RECOMMENDATION #1: Use God's Ordained Means to Get Help for Marital Problems.

A. Where do Christians seek help today for troubled marriages? In the Scriptures?
   1. Many Christians rush to the "Christian Bookstore" for authors assuming authority.
   2. With trouble still existing, other Christians seek to "Christian Psychologists."
   3. When these two sources have failed, they head for the world's psychiatrists.
   4. Are these sources ever right? Are diamonds ever recovered from sewers?
      a. God's word is absolutely sufficient. Why hunt in the sewer of man's ideas?
      b. There are no new concepts for marriage. It requires basic obedience to God.
      c. No other generation had the benefit of these sources. Have they helped us?

B. Pursue those with good marriages for friendship and an example (Pr 13:20; Ps 37:37).
   1. A good marriage will line up with scripture, not necessarily with your approval.
   2. Wisdom will benefit from the mistakes and learning of others before you.
   3. Friends are able to sharpen one another to maximum potential (Proverbs 27:17)*
   4. If you seek wisdom for your marriage, you will receive advice more than give it.

C. Confess faults to others, and seek their prayers and provocation (Jas 5:16; He 10:24).

D. Don't wait for problems to become severe before you seek help – give help a chance.
   1. Preventive maintenance is usually superior to major repairs. Consider it well.

2. It has been said, “An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.” Prevent it.

E. When you go for help, make sure you are ready to listen, consider, and change.
   1. Wise men will hear rebuke and instruction (Prov 1:5; 9:7-9; 12:15; 15:12; 23:9).
   2. It is impossible to help those that will not help themselves. You must be willing.
   3. An attitude of giving up will guarantee failure – seek help before this stage.

F. Older women are to teach younger women various marital duties (Titus 2:3-5).

G. Use your pastor for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction (II Tim 3:16-17).

H. When confrontation at home will not work, use the church (Ma 18:15-17; I Co 6:1-8).
   1. God ordained the church for matters of personal offence requiring arbitration.
   2. If you cannot solve a personal offense privately, then the church is to be used.
   3. It is important to remember that wives are also sisters in the church (I Cor 9:5).
   4. Examples of such trespasses are weight problems, sexual defrauding, lack of communication, inadequate food and clothing, use of time, personal habits, etc.
   5. In these situations, you need at least one other witness to confirm the offence.
   6. Some will bark against the church’s involvement here but then go to counselors.
   7. Why should we consider unbelieving doctors, counselors, social workers, etc.?
   8. Some think marital problems are sacrosanct and absolutely private, but how so?

RECOMMENDATION #2: Women Must Guard Against Children Replacing Husbands.

A. Women who emphasize children inordinately show far more than love of children.
   1. They show clearly that they missed their calling and do not love their husband.
   2. Inordinate affection is giving the children attention even close to her husband.
   3. Consider food selection for meals, willingness for special requests, physical affection, driving them here and there, interest and questions in their activities, thoughtful little surprises, emotional support when they’re discouraged, strong defense when they’re attacked, helping them with projects, adjustments to please friends, compromising expectations to accommodate failure, bear much, etc., etc.

B. God made the woman to be a wife, not a mother; and parental duties are temporary.
   1. A woman’s primary calling in life is to serve a man – her husband (I Cor 7:34).
   2. Women who replace their husbands with children find trouble when they leave.

C. When marital conflict occurs, it is easy for women to find fulfillment in motherhood.
   1. They can avoid confrontation with their husband; it is easier to seduce a child; it is a way to hurt her husband; the demands do not usually hurt her pride; etc.
   2. They pour their emotions, physical affection, and ambitions into their children.
   3. With a daughter, they play out their fantasies of the carefree life they desire.

4. With a son, they pursue the affection and friendship missing from their husband.

D. Young mothers with new babies must also carefully oppose this deceptive error.

RECOMMENDATION #3: Men Must Guard Against Their Careers Replacing Their Wives.

A. Men who emphasize their careers inordinately show more than diligence in business.
   1. They show that they missed the true riches in life and cannot manage their wife.
   2. Inordinate affection is devotion to business and work that neglects the marriage.
   3. Consider exhaustion for marital activities, constant postponement of marital plans, mental preoccupation with business, priority on monies for professional pursuits, single topic of conversation, greatest enthusiasm and interest, any price for meeting professional approval, extensive time away from chief companion, etc.
   4. In effect, men are prone to treat their professional pursuits as their mistress.

B. Read how God's law placed a definite priority on marriage over business (Deut 24:5).

C. Business is the means God ordained to support a wife and other goals, not an end.

D. When marital conflict occurs, it is easy for men to hide from responsibility in work.
   1. Solomon knew the escape syndrome well (Proverbs 19:13; 21:9,19; 25:24; 27:15).
   2. Phlegmatic and melancholy dispositions are particularly susceptible to withdrawal.
      a. Fear of confrontation and tension is so great – escape is worth any price.
      b. A workaholic is often a man crushed by his wife but edified by his work.
   3. They pour their emotions, physical efforts, and ambitions into their jobs.

RECOMMENDATION #4: Sex in Marriage Can Be Briefly Summarized By One Passage.

A. God commands husbands and wives to give the other "due benevolence" (I Cor 7:1-5).
   1. "Due benevolence" is whatever is necessary to keep the other from fornication.
   2. Men and women are different here, and each partner must consider the other.

B. Each partner has authority over the other's body, and physical denial is defrauding.

C. Sexual pleasure is honorable and undefiled in marriage – enjoy it all (Heb 13:4).

D. Consult the outline for Hebrews 13:4 for a more detailed consideration of sex.

E. The importance of the sexual relationship for a maximum marriage is very great.

RECOMMENDATION #5: Forget the Past Faults of Your Spouse that You Have Forgiven.

A. Repeating a matter assumed to be settled is sure to hurt your marriage (Prov 17:9).

B. The degree to which we forgive our spouses will return on our heads (Matt 6:14-15).

C. Hurtful reminders are infidelity, threats of separation, past behavioral patterns, etc.

RECOMMENDATION #6: Use God-Honoring Speech At All Times to Edify Your Partner.

A. Any wise man or woman understands that a soft answer will end fights (Prov 15:1).

B. Strive to use gracious speech that edifies your spouse (Ephesians 4:29-32; Col 4:6).

C. Learn to return blessing for railing at all times with your spouse (I Peter 3:8-11).

RECOMMENDATION #7: Respect Each Other Kindly In Confrontations or Disagreements.

A. Women are to reverence their husbands (Eph 5:33). This is very hard during a fight.
   1. The wife can potentially end all fights when they start by submitting absolutely.
   2. When you must express disagreement (a rare need), do it with the utmost of fear.

B. Men are to honour their wives (I Pet 3:7). This also is very hard during a fight.
   1. Men should strive to hear their wives as they wish their bosses would hear them.
   2. Your wife can add third party objectivity, a female perspective, and so forth.
   3. Two are better than one – even a wife (Ec 4:9), and men need women (Ge 2:18).

RECOMMENDATION #8: Give Your Spouse the Credit Deserved for Their Good Points.

A. Jesus commended wicked churches (Rev 2-3); Paul praised Corinth (I Cor 1:4-9; 11:2).

B. It is a fact of man's existence that praise is a positive reward that highly motivates.

RECOMMENDATION #9: When Reviewing a Marriage, Isolate Specific Problems Singly.

A. Helping a marriage where "everything is falling apart" is a very difficult task.

B. Proper submission by the wife or proper love by the husband will end most problems.

RECOMMENDATION #10: Care Enough About Your Marriage and Spouse to Confront.

A. Walking together requires agreement (Amos 3:2): agreement requires confrontation.

B. Do not let the sun go down upon your wrath (Eph 4:26). Reconcile before sleep.

RECOMMENDATION #11: Be Kind and Behave Yourself Right When

Forced to Confront.

A. The timing of many people is so terrible that they cannot do any good by it.

B. The manner of including a subtle reference to their faults is not intelligent.

RECOMMENDATION #12: Since It Takes Two to Fight, Make Sure You End the Fight.

A. A wise woman will learn to pacify (Pr 16:14) and not provoke (Pr 20:2) her husband.

B. If your spouse becomes an enemy, then overcome their evil with good (Rom 12:20-21).

C. If you can, learn to render blessing for railing (I Peter 3:8-11). Note the context.

RECOMMENDATION #13: Be Glorious In Your Marriage by Passing over Offences.

A. It is a glorious man that can defer anger and pass over transgressions (Prov 19:11).

B. Are you charitable? Loving? Can you believe, hope, bear, and endure all things?

RECOMMENDATION #14: Maximize Your Relationship With God to Maximize Marriage.

A. Walking in the flesh precludes you from fulfilling God's commands regarding marriage.

B. Walking in the flesh precludes God's blessing upon your marital relationship.