

Introduction to Marriage and Family

for the African Context

BAM414-MAM414



MINTS®

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LESSON ONE: General Challenges and Biblical Definition of Marriage

LESSON TWO: God's Plan for Marriage, Leaving and Cleaving

LESSON THREE: Roles for Husband and Wife in Marriage

LESSON FOUR: Expectations in Marriage Relationship

LESSON FIVE: Communication in Marriage

LESSON SIX: Necessity of Communication in Resolving Conflicts

LESSON SEVEN: Sexual Fulfilment and Intimacy in Marriage

LESSON EIGHT: Money Issues and Faithful Parenting

BIBLIOGRAPHY

INSTRUCTOR'S MANUAL

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this course is to introduce the student to both the biblical view of marriage, family and challenges marriage and families face. The course serves as an introduction to a much broader institution than what is contained in it.

COURSE CONTENT

The course is divided into eight lessons, following the biblical exposition of passages that teach about marriage and family. The course also integrates the challenges faced in marriage and family; proving biblical response and application. The main purpose is to give the student a foundation upon which one will be able to approach marriage and family issues from a biblical stance and build the rest upon it.

COURSE MATERIALS

The students are required to read the lecture notes thoroughly along with the cited Scriptures. Students are also required to read at least three books published on biblical marriage and family at his disposal.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

1. To define and describe the biblical view of marriage and family;
2. To understand the biblical passage cited in the course that deal with marriage and family ;
3. To develop a heart of helping marriages that are struggling to function;
4. To begin developing messages and teachings on marriage and family; and
5. To be able to articulate the biblical instructions on marriage and begin preaching, teaching and counseling married couples and those planning to marry.

STRUCTURE OF THE COURSE

This course has been organized into eight lessons. The lessons are selectively chosen to address the key foundational issues of marriage and family in modern Africa.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. Participate in the formal class time instruction.
2. Complete reading the lecture notes as contained in the eight lessons.
3. Read three texts; priority should be given to select from the bibliography in this course.
4. Write three sermons or study lesson plans marriage and family of five to seven pages at the Bachelor's level and ten to twelve pages at the Master's level plus a conference outline.
5. Complete the exam on "Introduction to Marriage and Family Course" that is based upon the questions at the end of the lessons.

COURSE EVALUATION

1. Student attendance (15%): One point will be given for each class hour attended.
2. Student homework (25%): Points will be given for completing the questions at the end of each lesson.
3. Student Readings (25%): Students will be given credit for completing the required reading.
4. Student Essay (25%): Students will prepare exegetical notes for a sermon/teaching. Master students will design a conference outline in addition to sermons.
5. Student Exam (10%): Students will complete an exam drawn from the questions at the end of each lesson.

BENEFITS OF THIS COURSE

In this course, the content is designed to address the key issues in marriage and family. The students will be encouraged to get back to the biblical foundation and approach this subject with scriptural backing. There are many challenges that face marriage and family and can only be

resolved by having a biblical view. Church leaders can help those they lead by pointing them to biblical instruction since marriage is a God given institution. The course also provides what is needed to strengthen marriages. It is also intended to prepare those that are intending to join the marriage institution.

Lesson One: Challenges and Biblical Definition of Marriage

1. General Challenges Facing the Family

The Epistle to the Ephesian church portrays a fulfilled family as God intended it to be (Eph. 5:18- 6:2). This is the first institution that God put in place before there were any others. It is this very institution that ought to set the pattern for every other subsequent ones that come there and after. Nevertheless we are observing a downward spiral of the family in our present day and age. This is a generation that has more literature written about the family than any other in the history of the world. One would expect that such information would be helpful to combat the present trends and reclaim the family back to her rightful position and function. “All we see is the eroding away of marriage.”¹

The challenges in our modern Africa are not so much different from the western world. Divorce is eating up than ever before even in the church. African nations are fighting homosexuality right from the top legislature. Western nations have threatened to cut aid to countries that oppose the recognition of homosexuals in their national parliamentary bills. The women liberation movement crusade is attacking our nations. Children’s rights are undermining the African traditional parenting. I am not saying that everything the African parents practice in raising children is the best but many good things are under attack.

¹ Allender, Dan B. and Longman, Tremper. *Intimate Allies* (Wheaton, Illinois: Tyndale House Pub., 1995) xv. “Marriages are under assault. Some suffer the tragedy of affairs, abuse, and divorce. Others endure the tedium of a relationship that is an institution and not romance. Most of us who are husbands and wives feel an exhaustion that comes from the frenetic pace required to honor the competing loyalties of family, work, church, community, parents, friends, neighbors, and more. Many couples that walk into a Sunday-morning church service are merely existing, not thriving in their marriage. Some spouse feel lonely, bored, angry, afraid, confused or empty. They may look as if they know what to do and how to do it , but appearances are often deceiving, especially in marriage.”

The modern family in Africa has decided to give their children to school teachers to raise them. It is common practice in Uganda to sacrifice children at a tender age by enrolling them into boarding schools. They live in an institutionalized environment only to be raised by matrons and wardens. The challenge is about the end product in all this. What kind of generation of parents are we preparing for the future? There is a growing urge for women to leave the raising of children and join the working class. This leaves our children to be raised by “house helpers.”²

The media has also bombarded the family with programs that are aired and shown twenty four hours a day. Our children keep on watching movies that contain characters that depict crime, violence, sexual immorality. The programs depict characters that make sin a game. It is no longer heinous but fun. Our children listen and watch and take what they view and hear as acceptable in society. We might be raising a violent, immoral, sick generation. This attacks the family institution.

If you destroy the family you destroy society. “Westerners tend to forget that marriage is lived out in society and that society has an impact on the meaning, expectations and aspirations of union.”³ Africans have a worldview that sees marriage as part of society. This means that “any discussion involving any practice in marriage must take the whole community into account, including the immediate living community, parents, brothers and sisters, uncles and aunts, grandparents, cousins and nieces and nephews - the whole extended family and the entire village.”⁴

Is there any hope for the family? The church has tried to address challenges for marriage and family existence through a number of fora; books have been written, seminars and conferences have been organized to address the issues. There is no doubt that such attempts have contributed to a certain extent. Nevertheless, failure to get back to the Biblical foundation of marriage, any of such attempts will only provide temporal help. The Bible says Children are

² The alternative term ‘house girls’ has been considered to be derogative term in the modern times. To use this term in our day would demean the person forgetting that she is offering services to the family not because she has no dignity but as matter of employment like any other job in society. For that matter these people ought to be respected they fill in the missing pieces to keep the family moving during the absence of the primary players in a family unit.

³ Kunhiyop, Samuel Waje. *African Christian Ethics* (Nairobi Kenya: Word Alive Pub., 2008) 191.

⁴ Kunhiyop 191.

blessings from God, family must be a place of love, joy, morality, security and where you build confidence. God designed it that way. God has a pattern to shape a family. It is found in his word.

Having pointed out these challenges, we need to get back to the foundation to seek God's original purpose. This will help us develop a biblical standard to enable us to pursue godliness. The church should not lament but rather get back to the biblical principles. There is hope for the family.

“Our marriages can grow. They can escape the cycle of boredom, emptiness, anger, and fear but not without honest assessment. Something is wrong in every heart: We are sinners. Consequently, when two sinners join together in marriage, something will always be wrong in our hearts and in our marriages.”⁵

2. Getting Back to the Fundamentals: Sacredness of Marriage

Marriage is to be between a man and a woman. Biblical marriage is a covenant made between one man and one woman to live with one another until death. “Marriage is a total commitment and a total sharing of the total person with another person until death.”⁶ Biblical marriage is a marriage founded upon God's Word and lived out according to it. This is from the very beginning of creation (Gen. 2:18-25: 25).

¹⁸ Then the LORD God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him." ¹⁹ So out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature that was its name. ²⁰ The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him. ²¹ So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. ²² And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into

⁵ Allender xvi.

⁶ Mack, A. Wayne. *Strengthening your Marriage*. (Phillipsburg: P& R Pub., 1999) 6.

a woman and brought her to the man. ²³ Then the man said, "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man." ²⁴ Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. ²⁵ And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.

Therefore marriage in God's eyes is the result of sacred vows between one man and one woman to be committed in covenant (not to be broken by man) to Him and to each other. This is not a suggestion but a command, (Heb. 13:4), everyone is expected to respect marriage. This passage has no respect of class or people group. All are called for to honor the marriage institution. The problem is that we see very little done to respect this sacred institution. We are living in the last days where so much goes against God's order. Marriage is not being honored as it ought to be in the present situation. Look at the whole society we live in today. We need to get back to the fundamentals and find out what God says about marriage.

People have tried to redefine and attack marriage. This follows the scripture that warns that we are living in the last days where evil abounds on every side. We were forewarned by Apostle Paul as he writes to Timothy in chapter four beginning at the first verse. Paul warns the church by the Spirit of God that some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons. This will come through some insincere liars who will have developed seared consciences. They will go to the point of teaching people not to get married. That is it; forbidding what God had already allowed to be practiced.

One of the signs of the end times is attacking this divine institution of marriage. In fact Paul is as if waking Timothy from sleep telling him, to realize the hard times. Be on alert it will happen. He repeats this in 2 Timothy 3:1 "But understand this that in the last days there will come times of difficulty. These are the times when people are unloving."

2.1 God's View of Marriage: It's Foundation

It is not a modern practice neither a new institution. The institution has been in place even before any State or Country crafted any domestic relations Bill. It was there even before gowns or wedding rings were in place. It existed before sin came into the world. The Bible has all kinds of texts written about this institution. God started it, instituted it and honored it. It appears in the first book of the Bible and its ultimate fulfilment is finally observed in the last book of the Bible since marriage is a picture of the union the church has with Christ her redeemer.

God defines marriage and not man. We have no right to do so. We did not start it nor did man contribute to its invention. After the United States Supreme Court ruled 5-4 on same sex marriage, Franklin Graham made the following statement:

The Supreme Court of the United States has ruled today that same - sex marriage is legal in all 50 states. With all due respect to the court, it did not define marriage, and therefore is not entitled to re-define it. Long before our government came into existence, marriage was created by the One who created man and woman - Almighty God - and His decisions are not subject to review or revision by any manmade court. God is clear about the definition of marriage in His Holy Word: “Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh” (Gen. 2:24). I pray God will spare America from His judgment, though, by our actions as a nation, we give Him less and less reason to do so.⁷

In Mathew 19 Jesus takes us to a trip into antiquity to show us the original design. He draws all the authority from the very word of God. He is answering the Pharisees who came to test him about the issue of divorce. He bases his proof on the infallible, inerrant word of God. In Matthew 19:3, 4, he challenges his audience by asking some rhetorical questions: “Have you not read?” He is saying you have forgotten what you read. We are called by Christ to get back to the maker. Get back to the factory and ask the founder, the manufacturer. Don’t even try to redesign it without asking the copyright owner. He has not given anyone permission to redesign it. We are supposed to go back to the beginning and search the files. This institution has and always been ordained from the beginning of the world. He created them male and female. There is no

⁷ Billygraham.org, 4 Oct. 2015. Web. 10 Oct. 2015.

provision for female and female nor male and male marriage relationship. It has always been male and female. Neither is it between Male (s) and female (s), no, male – one and female -one, thus there was no provision for polygamy. This has been like this from the beginning of creation. This is not some order that man can change. This arrangement should not even be taken to any legislature to debate. It was done, so let it be so. The one who made it that way remains faithful and justified in what he does. Remember what we saw earlier, before any institution was in place marriage was. It is interesting that even before the church was, marriage was.

2.2 God has the Right to Define Marriage

We have already observed in Matthew 19 the definition is that he made them male and female. We have a heterosexual relationship in view. The Bible is clear that God made them as two opposite sexes. There is no room for same sex marriages. We have several scriptures that confirms this very definition and truth. The apostle Paul teaches the same truth in 1 Corinthians 7:2 that each man ought to have his own wife. He is affirming the creation order of one husband for one wife. This institution was started by God inaugurating it between two people of opposite sexes; that is Adam and Eve. They were required to be one and it was God who officiated the first wedding thus blessing it to be a perpetual practice throughout successive generations. It is absurd to see that man is diverting from that original plan. This is to be permanent as long as the two shall live. Jesus taught that there will be no marriage in the life to come. The very experience of marriage we go through is just a test of the everlasting relationship we will have with the Lord; Jesus is the bride groom to the church as his bride. We will go deeper into this subject when we come to Lesson Two focusing on “leaving and cleaving.”

Since God took the initiative without any mediation in instituting this wonderful arrangement, we do well to observe with seriousness the guidelines he has provided if at all marriage is to have meaning and purpose.

2.3 Spiritual Aspect of Marriage

Since marriage is from God it has a theological significance. This is the very reason why God said in Genesis 1:26, 27, “Let us make man in our own image, after our likeness... and so God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.” We observe here the whole council of God coming together to move a motion and act on it to make man. This does not stop at creating them but he blesses them too (Gen.1:28ff.). In fact he commands them to be fruitful which is another way of saying have sexual relationship now that I have brought you together and blessed your relationship. He is saying now it is okay to sleep together and as a result children are to be born through that physical union. Enjoying each other is also a theological issue only that we live in a world where a number of people have gone into this physical union without publically coming before witnesses to verify and bless their marriage. And through it, they would have a seed, who could assist them in taking dominion. Adam and Eve alone could never take dominion.

It is a godly and good thing to marry. Churches are facing co-habiting cases on a daily basis. We must do all we can in our day and age to encourage our young people to be serious about marriage and stop living immoral lives. It is good for those that God has not gifted with the gift of singleness. Sad to say that man has made this great institution to appear as bad. It is also sad that some have taken it to be a bondage other than a context of joy and growth in the Christian life. It is to be a context of sanctification. It should be a place where we desire more of the Lord who is our ultimate and perfect satisfaction. No one should come to marriage thinking that it will bring full satisfaction. Our contentment can only be found in Christ Jesus. Marriage should point us to Christ if at all we are to enjoy it and get the best out of it. I have always read the following lines from Powlison and Yenchko to couples in my premarital counseling sessions.

First, are you looking to marriage to make you happy or complete, to give you identity or purpose? When this happens, Christ is no longer your Lord in a practical way. Marriage is a wonderful gift from God, but it cannot take God's place. Do you think marriage will provide meaning in your life? Direction? Security? Self-respect? Do you hope marriage will remove a sense of despair, inadequacy, failure, bitterness, or isolation? Do you say to yourself, “if only I could find a husband, then I'd be happy?” I can find love,

acceptance, and security if I get married,” or “my life is a failure unless I get married”? If so you are asking too much of marriage.⁸

The two in a marriage relationship find true contentment in the creator God who started this institution. The family is God’s thought. It comes from God’s mind and idea. We will be seeing later that God protects this institution from decay even though our present situations indicate an extinction of the family.

3. God’s Original Purposes for Marriage

Since everything exists for the glory of God, marriage is no exception. The Bible says that Christ is the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. So marriage was started by God for him and for his glory. The creator made all things and knows how to preserve them. Marriage is God’s making which calls for man to look to God for any successful relationship to thrive.

We affirm that since the one who instituted marriage is divine, the purpose for it must have a theological aspect. As a matter of critical importance we must get back to the foundation and find out the basic purposes for marriage. Marriage is beneficial to man after God’s own idea. It is not man who thought of it. Adam did not ask for it neither did he initiate it. God alone planned the best for Adam. He had the idea and birthed it. That is the very reason why we must turn to the Word of God to establish the divine purpose of God’s institution of marriage. Theologians have some variations when it comes to the purposes of marriage. They have run into various ways of describing what God’s purpose for marriage essentially is. Much writing has been done to this effect trying to describe this subject as a way of helping this institution to survive and be put back to its original footing. In doing this many have run into unnecessary and inapplicable helps only to make matters worse. The solution to this is to get back to divine foundational purpose for marriage if at all we are to get to the real reason and goal for marriage.

⁸ Powlison, David & Yenchko, John, *Pre-engagement, 5 Questions to Ask Yourself* (Phillipsburg: P&R Pub., 2000) 3-4.

Some have said the three-fold purposes are to reflect God's image on earth, reign and reproduce. Some say it is about companionship, sexual intimacy and multiplication of man. Others have said it is to be fruitful, fill the earth and subdue it.

All of this and the more depend on how someone interprets the biblical passages that state God's purposes for marriage. The main passages are Genesis.1:28; 2:18). These passages come in the context of creation. The purposes are set forward during the state of man's innocence. "And God blessed them and said to them, be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth." Then the Lord God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone, I will make a helper fit for him." We can conclude from these passages that we have some corporate purposes but also some individual purposes. Marriage was made for the purpose of companionship and sexual intimacy as a result that children be born. If we include dominion, then we are not doing justice for those who are not married, yet they join in the corporate purpose for all to reign on the earth. If we say it is for procreation, then we are not thinking of those who may never have children in life. In any case someone may argue that the purposes are laid down in the absence of sin. This may be correct or not for I tend to avoid forcing the passage to say what is not explicitly or implicitly stated. There remains room for debate and research.

3.1 Marriage Meant for Man's Benefit/ Companionship

God knew well that there was loneliness on the side of the first man (Adam). God's interpretation of Adam's situation before making Eve was "not good." Remember after creating everything in Genesis 1, his interpretation was always "and he saw it was good." When it comes to the state of man without a wife, God says "it is not good" (Gen.2:18a). God meant that man was not happy; there was a missing part on the side of Adam. There were some unmet needs and only God knew what was best for him. Man needed fulfillment in a specific sense; by this we don't mean that what he lacked could give him perfect contentment, but rather that, the wife could meet some of his basic needs for that particular institution.

Adam was about to experience God designed blessings and joy. God intends that the two in marriage experience continuous blessings and ongoing joy. Loneliness is not the ideal state for men and women except for the few who are gifted with a life of celibacy. “The purpose in having the institution of marriage is seen in God’s desire to provide for companionship, children, and the completion of the man and the woman in each other in preserving chastity.”⁹

God’s purposes for marriage are much higher and greater than our own. In Genesis 2:18 when God said it is not good for man to be alone, He created Eve as an answer to that loneliness. Even though Adam had a perfect relationship with God, a perfect environment, and had all the possessions he wanted, there was still a void of intimacy in Adam’s life. This intimacy blends two individuals into oneness and sameness. Eve was made for Adam to become a suitable helper, a woman that would complement and complete him in every way. The provision for a companion are reciprocal, each of the two complements the other. They are made for each other. It was not an addition in the family but rather to bring to man what he did not have so is man to bring to his wife what she didn’t have.

3.2 Multiply a Godly Seed

Procreation is one of the larger purposes of marriage in that God created it as a means for Christ to come as a redeemer. God intended the home to be a place of raising children, a godly generation. They are to be born and nurtured in a godly environment. Parents must have godly purposes and goals in raising children as we will see later in the lesson on “faithful parenting.” Parents have God given responsibilities to impart values that will eventually be passed on from one generation to another for the glory of God. The two married people must take this as a privilege that God has endowed on them to participate in bringing a new life and raising it for God.

3.3 Sexual Intimacy and Fulfillment

⁹ George R. Dunivent. *The Biblical Doctrine of Marriage* (Thesis (Th.M)—Dallas Theological Seminary, 1951) 54.

There can be no sexual joy apart from having two people of the opposite sex living in a marriage relationship. The same act of sexual union is a theological issue, for the Bible says in Hebrews 13:4 that it is good; the marriage bed should be kept holy or undefiled. Sex is not simply for procreation as some have taken it, it is also for meeting the sexual desires in the two within a marriage covenant. We will deal with this subject in a more detailed way in Lesson Seven.

3.4 Ultimate Purpose is to Glorify God

Christian marriage is intended to fulfill divine purposes that bring the most glory to our God.

“To the Christian, marriage is the means to the fulfillment of divine ends. The marriage union, like man himself, is designed for the glory of God, and for the exhibition of His purposes of love on earth...marriage was instituted as an earthly symbol of the spiritual relation between God and man...”¹⁰

Marriage is intended to reflect a much higher purpose which is our relationship with God. In Ephesians 5:32, marriage signifies spiritual matter, pointing to Christ and his church. This verse follows a quotation from Genesis 2:24 which point to the union that Adam and Eve enjoyed in marriage. The creation of Adam and Eve was intended in its design to point to the union here described; the union of Christ and the church.¹¹ It is intended to make man more like his maker. In another sense it is transformational in purpose. Marriage is intended to transform man into the image of his son Jesus Christ. There are trials, challenges, joys and achievements in marriage. All of this is experienced through the grace that Christ provides leading man to a glorious end. There is no institution on earth where man experiences greater sanctification touch than the marriage relationship. It is one area where a believer exercises faith looking to the Savior for his daily living and victory over sin and selfishness. This type of struggle with sin in a wicked world, making it so difficult to glorify God in marriage justifies the fact that marriage lived by God's grace results in glorifying God. There is no higher purpose than this as

¹⁰ Dwight H. Small, *Design for Christian Marriage* (Westwood, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1991) 22-4.

¹¹ Adam and Eve's relationship was a type of Christ and his church. That is why believers are parts of his body, the church. Just as Adam got a revelation and understood it by calling Eve, bone of his bones and flesh of his flesh, Christ calls us his own. That also makes sense since for the first Adam for having been a figure of him that was to come as well as in being the federal head to his posterity.

individuals in marriage get conformed into the image of Christ. Only in Christ can we glorify God truly. God intended that man mirrors him. God made man special in comparison to the rest of creation. He endowed man with that special capacity to have a deeper relationship with him. He bears some special characteristics that make him different from the rest of creation. That specialty places him in a different position of relationship with his maker.

Being created in the image of God sets up man with a blessing of becoming more like his maker. Becoming more like God comes out of a constant mutual relationship with our maker. This relationship is for both male and female as they grow in their knowledge of God and walking daily in his statutes. It is through this that man becomes a creator in a certain sense. Man becomes innovative and is used as an agent of transforming this present creation. It is through this God given capacity that we interact with the present world and explore the best out of it and use it for the glory of God.

We are blessed with this image in that we interact with our maker in various ways and gain better understanding of the material and non-material world for his glory. The same image capacity enables us to live in communities as social beings imaging the perfect Trinitarian relationship. God has imprinted that on the mind and heart of man, male and female to live as relational beings. It is that same image that constantly leads the two in marriage to develop the one flesh principal. The principle of the one yet many as it is with the three persons in the Godhead.

After God created the earth and the animals, He said, “Let Us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” The account continues, “God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them” (Gen. 1:26-27). God’s first purpose for creating man and woman and joining them in marriage was to mirror His image on earth. Center your attention on those words, *Mirror His image*. The Hebrew word for “mirror” means to reflect God, to magnify, exalt, and glorify Him. Marriage should reflect God’s image to a world that desperately needs to see who He is.

Because we're created in the image of God, people who wouldn't otherwise know what God is like should be able to look at us and get a glimpse.¹²

Upon thoroughly considering three of the primary proposals for God's purpose for marriage as a *functional* purpose, a *sacramental* purpose, and a *transformational* or *sanctifying* purpose, it was evidenced that the purpose of sanctification biblically and theologically, on the whole, exceeds the other two purposes as God's primary intention for the institution of marriage. Apart from recognizing the purpose of marriage as such, people are defrauded. If marriage allows us the opportunity to crave and become the holiness of God, as has been shown, we can apply this as the foundation upon which all other marriage quandaries can be answered. Questions concerning how to save, better, grow, or even end a marriage along with the roles in, the tasks of, and the reasons for marriage can only be deciphered by first going back to God's primary purpose for marriage and building a biblical response from there. This is also true of defending the pro-marriage position to both believers and non-believers as well as answering to controversial issues such as cohabitation and same-sex marriages.¹³

4. The Distortion of the Image of God and its Effect on Marriage

The image of God is distorted in Genesis 3:1-7. That led to the distortion of the marriage institution. The curse which came upon marriage due to the fall of Adam and Eve fell into sin can only be lifted by Christ. The Lord of glory did acknowledge the effects of this curse which came upon marriage and his advocacy of the creation ideal in Mark 10:2-12. Man needs a redeemer if at all he is to get back into the rightful purposes of God for marriage. Our study will show that there is a struggle now to live for the glory of God and this affects marriage. Nevertheless we do not lament since Christ has lifted the curse and given us hope to again live our marriages for the glory of God. In the midst of husbands and wives living selfishly there is still hope to glorify God as the two believing parties live their lives for the glory of God.

¹² Rainey, Dennis, Family Life, Web. 24 Oct. 2015.

¹³ Lee, Jagers, Web. 6 Sept. 2015.

Conclusion

We have to admit that the family is facing challenges never like this before. Having the theology of marriage in the background helps us to find ways of resolving the challenges through proper biblical applications. It is not too late to restore the family to its original footing.

Summary

We have observed that challenges in families are realities to not underestimate. The solution to this is to get back to the fundamentals of marriage and family. We get back to God who instituted marriage. It is he who defines marriage and it is he who sets forth its goals and purposes. Even though sin has affected this institution, our hope is in Christ who lifted the curse to restore us back to the original divine purposes.

Lesson One Questions

1. Where can man turn to save the family from its overwhelming challenges?
2. What is Biblical marriage? Cite the primary passage that point to this truth.
3. What is one of the songs of the end-times in relation to the marriage?
4. Why is it not right for man to define marriage?
5. The New Testament goes back into antiquity to show us the original design of marriage. Can you state it and cite the passage where Jesus speaks out on this definition?
6. Besides condemning polygamy as sin in Mathew 19:3-4, what other disturbing sexual sin is condemned in this original design of Male and Female relationship?
7. State the overarching. Ultimate divine purpose for marriage.
8. What else is marriage meant for apart from bringing honor to the creator?
9. Marriage is intended to reflect a much higher purpose, state it.
10. Where can we turn to alleviate the distortion brought upon marriage at the fall?

Lesson Two: God's Plan for Marriage, Leaving and Cleaving

In this lesson we will focus on the overall plan for marriage. We will consider the process of leaving and cleaving and the challenges that couples face as they exercise leaving for the purpose of cleaving to each other.

1. One Man - One Woman

God's plan for marriage is covenantal in nature; it is a covenant to be between two people of the opposite sex. Marriage is nearly as old as the human race. As noted above in Lesson One, it was ordained by the Creator Himself. It was God's will that a man and a woman become one in marriage. There is no provision for polygamy in the creation order. In the same way we find no provision for divorce from the very beginning of this wonderful institution. The Bible commands the two to become one flesh. The Bible speaks of the man leaving his father and mother and cleaving to his wife (Gen.2:24). Some have argued that it is a one sided leaving, forgetting that it is implied in the text that both have to leave and cleave to each other for any meaningful relationship to occur.

The plan is given to man from the very beginning "one man, one wife" it is for life. That is why the Lord is not pleased with divorce. In Malachi 2:14-16, the Lord Jehovah speaks out against divorce and says that he hates it because it is not the ideal plan for marriage. The Lord permitted divorce in case there is "fornication or adultery committed after a contract, or being detected before marriage... yet nothing but adultery, or such willful desertion as can no way be remedied by the church, ... is cause sufficient of dissolving the bond of marriage."¹⁴ This can

¹⁴ *The Westminster Confession of Faith*. Chapter 24:5,6. The 'Assembly of learned and godly Divines' met at Westminster from August 1643 to February 1649 to prepare a confession of faith for the three kingdoms of England, Scotland and Ireland.

happen in the worst situation after trying out all possible means of reconciling the two. Before we go any further, we need to understand what it means to leave and cleave.

2. Leaving and Cleaving

“Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh” (Gen. 2:24 KJV). Other translations render “leave and cleave” as “leave and be united” (NIV), “leave and be joined” (NASB), and “leave and hold fast” (ESV). So, what precisely does it mean to leave your father and mother and cleave to your spouse? The case in point has been one of the hardest commands in marriage because it is a lifelong process.

We begin by explaining what it means to “leave and cleave.” The two terms/concepts have deep meanings as derived from the “Strong’s Hebrews and Greek Dictionary “To leave (AZAB) means to loosen, relinquish, permit, commit self-forsake and cleaving (DABAQ) to cling, to impinge, adhere (as if with glue), abide, fast cleave-fast together, follow close (hard after), be joined (together) to keep together, to be deeply attracted to one another, stick together.”¹⁵

2.1 The Biblical Principle of Leaving and Cleaving

Having got the biblical definitions for these concepts of “leaving and cleaving,” it would be unfair if one jumps into the shortcomings of the day without considering the biblical foundation of this principle of “leaving and cleaving.” When God created man in the garden, he saw that there was a vacuum in his life. He needed someone to bring him companionship. None of the created things then could meet that need. Man was not yet a unit. He lacked something. Then God created a helpmate to fill that gap. In Genesis 2:24 “we find an instruction that does not seem to make sense in the generation of Adam and Eve, for neither one of them had “parents.”¹⁶

¹⁵ PC Study Bible V4, *Strong’s Greek/Hebrew Definitions*, Brown, Drivers and Briggs Lexicon.

¹⁶ Eyrich, A. Howard, *Marriage and Family Counseling* (Teachers Notes Manual, 2007) 75. Print.

He goes on to say that “this statement, however stands as an instruction to how the marriage unit should be established and nurtured in the generations to come.”¹⁷

This means that God had already set the standards even before what we are going to see as hindrances to positive leaving and cleaving were in place. The Spirit of God foreseeing what was to happen, directed the husband and wife to live by the principles determined by the inventor of marriage. God knows what is best for man. It is up to man to make a choice whether to follow His leading or reject and face the consequences. What did God do then? He made the statement, one that would apply to any godly marriage. Man was commanded to leave his parents with the purpose of being united to his wife. That is cleaving to her. As most commentators would agree that, the command equally applies to the wife. The leaving and cleaving is a mutual act. There are major problems that would arise if this were not the case in marriage.

2.2 Dangers that Arise for Failure to Leave and Cleave

Let us now observe the dangers that would arise if the two fail to leave and cleave.

- (a) Serious problems have arisen where couples refuse to leave and cleave. This is common to people who never give up on leaving their parents. They have a piece of their lives stuck in their parents. They cannot live without getting instructions from their parents. They are so glued to their parents to the point that breaking those ties would be committing a deadly sin. Such ties need to be broken: we are dealing with a union that takes work to develop. A union that goes beyond what friendship is in the world. If the two are still showing more connected to other people other than they are to their marriage partners, then the ideal cannot be achieved.
- (b) Leaving and cleaving means more than sexual union as some take it to be. It is also about making decisions together. It is giving up the rest of other things and live with your marriage partner as one person. It is to be attracted to each other deeply in a permanent union. One

¹⁷ Eyrich, A. Howard 75.

must deal with it radically with a willingness to enter a covenant with your mate. It goes so deep to the point where by even if you feel like not doing it, you have to do it. It is a command that must be obeyed. It is not based on feelings. Whether a person feels like loving or not loving her/his mate, he is to do it (Mal. 2:14; Prov.2:17). It takes the two to blend their personalities. It is not one selfish individual trying to win over his/her mate to his /her way of life: No, it is giving in and adopting new orientations. It is accepting your mate as he is and be able to receive the non-sinful habits/lifestyle of the other if it is for the saving of your marriage. It is about working out things together. It is about solving problems as a couple. It is about seeking the best for your marriage as a team. It is about making resolutions that affect both you and not one of you. It is “oneness in plurality”¹⁸ which means that the two begin to incorporate their individual personalities and perceptions into each other. The two get so blended and come up with one beautiful product. As Paul points out the marriage union ought to be the closest picture of our union with Christ which makes this union stand out among all unions one has ever thought of.

The concept of marriage as companionship also appears in Malachi 2:14, where a different, but very complementary, term is used: The Lord has been witness between you and the wife of your youth to whom you have been faithless, although she is your companion and your wife by covenant. Now the word companionship has its kernel the idea of union or association. ... A companion is one with whom you are intimately united in thoughts, goals, plans, efforts, and in the case of marriage – bodies.¹⁹

2.3 Why is it Hard to Leave and Cleave?

The simple answer to this question would be because of “Sin.” Just answering it this way leaves the audience dissatisfied. It seems to be simplistic but understanding it validates the answer. In many cases these things flow from incorrect ideas in the culture, passed on from generation to generation without thought. Once they are exposed to the light of God’s word, then sinful habits are exposed and must be addressed. In this section we will briefly consider a tool to help families

¹⁸ Eyrich, A. Howard 79.

¹⁹ Adams, E. Jay, *Marriage and Remarriage in the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Pub., House, 1980) 11-2.

cope up with the possible dangers that come as a result of refusing to leave and cleave. Common sense will tell you that people get/are attached to places, and to people such as their parents. These attachments can become hindrances to departing and leaving. In these situations there are a variety of possible reasons that people use to justify their not leaving. It is important to discuss some of these tendencies among many.

First, distances matter less to a person who has a love for his origin. Many couples have been married and tried to move long distances. They try to distance themselves from their parents. They do it thinking that distance would cut them off from their controlling parents. On the other hand, there are couples that would move in a walking distance and sense nothing pulling them regularly to their parents. Parents and their children in traditional Africa built their homes on the same compound and some still practice it making the issue of distance inapplicable for some. This is why leaving is a choice of the heart in obedience to God. Distancing oneself from parents is not the solution. It is rather a heart issue. It is about commitment. That is why I said earlier, that it is a sin issue.

“Leaving – nor does it mean that you must make great geographical move. Living too close to parents at the beginning of a marriage may make it more difficult to leave, but it is possible to leave your father and mother and still live next door. Conversely, it is possible to live a thousand miles away from your parents and not leave them. In fact, you may not have left your parents even though they are dead.”²⁰

If one of the two or even both were used to interact with their parents, it will not make a difference even if they move some long distances from their parents. They will keep up the unbroken communication. There is no question that this will affect their marital relationship. They have not really left their parents. They still live in the past. Couples are required to sacrifice those relationships for the sake of cultivating this new lifelong commitment to each other. It is a sacrifice in the sense that, past orientations we cherish have to go. However much they hurt, they are not to come in between the two. The two are to develop to their potential by unreservedly

²⁰ Mack, A. Wayne 2.

committing themselves to love and cherish each other more than the rest of their family members.

Secondly, they will find it difficult to start new interactions. The problem comes by not giving up lifestyles lived during their single life. They want to remain rigid. They get into a conflict without any of the two yielding to the other. They fight at almost every point. It is because one or both of the two refuse to be consistent in leaving and not turning back. It is not possible to cleave until you leave mother and father. Whenever one feels insecure in bonding he may resort to act in various sinful ways. These may include yelling, withholding sex, coming home late, arguing etc. And that is unhealthy to bonding. They may have left the place and now living in a new place without living psychologically. It may seem like they are now a couple totally autonomous but they remain in their parents' home. They still hold dearly to their parental jurisdiction. They do not mention it but act it. It is a hard thing to leave in a moment. Parents have much to do to prepare their children adapt to new situations.

The parents might have had so much influence on their children that leaving them ends into so much frustration. Children learn by watching their parents. If a child grows up with no idea of doing things for herself/himself, it may cripple the child's future. A girl child growing up in a home where the mother handles money will find it hard to live with a husband who is in charge of finances. The two will need a lot of work to change. The young couple's upbringing can cause a lot of damage to this move towards the two bonding in a marriage relationship. Some children grow up with overly compliant to one of the parents which create imbalance in who calls the shots. They take this along in their new family unit. The young partner lives with these instincts hurting her spouse unknowingly. It is not a good orientation but he/she thinks it is just the way of life. Parents do contribute much to the way their children act in their newly established homes.

“Think about the issue of continual comparison; not doing the things mother or father used to do.”²¹ A wife or husband hates to hear this type of language if it becomes the daily standard for running their new family unit. It is making the parents the infallible rule for their children’s family unit.

Another issue is gossip of talking to the mate’s parents about a mate in a negative way. This also may lead one of the two to take sides with the parents on some issues. This will mean eventually siding with the parents against your own mate. This is very dangerous to a marriage relationship. One ends up getting their final counsel from the parents. Communication breaks down. The parents also fuel it more by allowing their daughter/son continuing living under their counsel like someone who has never left home. They treat him like a minor and he/she allows it too.

Thirdly, the parents’ over possessiveness and nosing into the young couples’ marriage can be detrimental to the two leaving and cleaving. Some parents have a tendency of interfering into the affairs of their children’s marriage. They have the mentality of still trying to direct them as if they are still under their authority. They forget that they are now a family unit in spite of the time spent in their relationship. African couples struggle in this area due to the extended family structure that characterize society at large. The wife gets married to the husband’s family. That threatens the wife and makes her live daily at the standards set by her husband’s family. In my own Ganda culture we have an old saying “better to live with your mother-in-laws grave than finding her alive.”²²

We have parents who struggle to continue being the decision makers; making decisions for their married kids. They tend to struggle with their unmet expectations. They had hoped for

²¹ The husband or wife keeps on making statements about his parents comparing them with what they do in their home. Statements like “My mother is the best when it comes to cooking this dish, or I wish my Dad was around to give you some tips on how to”

²² It was an old saying but with lot of meaning. Mothers in laws on the husband’s side had much control in their son’s new family unit. They nosed into everything that took place in the home. This was possible in the old days because sons used to build their houses on the same compound where they grew up. That put the young couple to be in close monitoring by the parents. Women used to stay home all day. That is understandable that mothers in law will observe their daughters’ in law all day and get involved in their children’s marriage on a daily basis. We are living in times where this is fading away apart from some tribes that are still practicing it in the rural areas. Education has also helped to curb this interference. I think it is a very disrespectful saying though it had some sense to it.

some payback from their children. It so happens that they get married without realizing their goals. They keep on struggling to make things happen. The two newly married young couple struggles with interference. They want to be independent but still have a love for their parents and not wanting to offend them. They have not left in reality. They are together but still back in their single life. It is not wrong to shape your family just like your parents' family. That is not the point I am trying to make here. It is not wrong in itself to imitate godly practices from our parents. That is not the point here. There are some wonderful parental traits that may be implemented without any appearance of creating conflict in a new family. The problem comes when the young couple make the parents the standard upon which to build their family. Howard gives a clear warning to seemingly possible preconditioning that might end up into two opposite directions if not checked.

Imitating positive feelings and thoughts about the family of origin can become a problem when they are a basis of an excessive desire to do things just like they were in their parents' home. Or Reactive – Negative feelings and thoughts about the family of origin may condition the married children to a “reactive” dependency. This leads to an excessive preoccupation with doing the opposite of what used to be done in the parents' home.²³

We are dealing with one of the major sicknesses that attack marriage. If one person fails to leave his family of origin and still hold wholeheartedly to it, marriage grows sour. This takes a hand of God to break it. The two must be ready to adjust to the new situation and know that they vowed to leave.

3. Putting off and Putting on for Successful Bonding in Marriage

The ultimate plan for marriage cannot be achieved if the two have no willingness to break the past and be ready to put on the new. Nevertheless before I deal with this, something has to be said about parents that have sons that are married or ready to be married. They must remember that when their sons marry, there is a way in which they must leave you as a parent. It is true

²³ Eyrich, A. Howard 78.

they must honor their parents in love. However, a parent should never ask his children to do things that separate them from their spouses. It is important for parents to do things that help these young couples have strong marriages.

Let us consider some of these aspects drawn from Wayne Mack's treatment of this subject in his book "*Sweet Hearts for a Life Time*." He does spell out several aspects that define what leaving means in a marriage relationship. He spends two chapters on this subject. In chapter eleven he shows his reader that leaving involves putting off while chapter twelve deals with what to put on.

3.1 Putting off

Let me first give a summary of the aspect of putting off. If the couple still hold on their parental centered life-style, then they have never left in reality. So, "leaving means that we must put off the natural, imitative, or reactionary relationship that we have with our parents. In other words, we should not do things automatically the same way that our parents did just because that is what we are used to."²⁴ It is important to know what the Word of God says to a certain action before we do it, it is wrong to simply assume an act valid because the parents practiced it.

Another aspect of leaving that Wayne mentions is "putting off inordinate reliance on our parents' approval for our security and happiness in life."²⁵ When we leave our parents, it should be your primary concern to fulfill your mate's desires and not your parents. Leaving also involves "putting off a close and exclusive confidence with our parents."²⁶ Your husband/wife are the persons who shares the secrets now. It is so disappointing to find a married person sharing deep secrets with his/her parents rather than his/her mate. "Leaving our parents means being willing to give up our traditions regarding family structures and function, if those traditions are not commanded by scripture."²⁷ In other words, it is not good to try to push your

²⁴ Mack, A. Wayne., and Mack, Carol, *Sweethearts for a Life Time* (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: P& R Pub., 2006) 80.

²⁵ Mack 81.

²⁶ Mack 81.

²⁷ Mack 81.

family traditions of origin into this new family unit. There will be a crush. The two must come to an understanding and strike a compromise if necessary. Lastly, Wayne says:

Leaving is putting off the tendency to play the blame game. As long as we are blaming our parents for our deficiencies – not enough love, encouragement, opportunities, material goods, etc. - we are not leaving them as God intended. A related aspect is leaving behind all bitterness and resentment we have carried with us from childhood. No parents are perfect in the way that they raise their children, and we must be willing to be tenderhearted and forgiving as Christ commanded.²⁸

I have seen many couples use this last aspect as a way of escape. They have used it to justify their wrong behavior. They have used it to neglect their parents saying that they were never helped when growing up. That is against the biblical imperative “vengeance is the Lord’s” Wayne goes further to show the “putting on aspects” in the chapter that follows.

3.2 Putting on

This is in line with the biblical teaching on putting off and putting on. Therefore, in the family we face the same need. It is not just enough to leave but one must put on something in leaving. The family must produce tangible results. There must be measurable results. Leaving our parents means:

“Putting on a peer relationship with them. This replaces the dependency relationship that we had as children, which we are to put off. It also means accepting responsibility for making our own decisions. We put off the need for our parents’ approval.”²⁹

Accepting responsibility to make our own decisions ... though there is still a place for our parents’ counsel-they should remain advisers and resources to us throughout our lives-our decisions should, must now be made because we are sure that they are what

²⁸ Mack 82.

²⁹ Mack 84.

God wants for our family. Leaving means that we learn to look at our parents objectively, evaluate their strength and weaknesses, and love them anyway because God has given them to us.³⁰

He is not saying that we neglect their advice one hundred percent, no, we begin to look at their advice objectively to see if they are biblical.

“Leaving also means putting on the willingness to honestly and respectfully discuss our family backgrounds with our mates without becoming defensive. It also means putting on determination to make one’s mate, rather than one’s parents or anything else, the most significant person in one’s life.”³¹

As noted earlier, the process of leaving is not that easy as some take it to be. Many couples do struggle with it almost the rest of their lives. It drains people’s thinking. The point, I am trying to make is that couples do find it difficult because of sin. We are by nature sinful, selfish creatures who want our own way. We want to see things done our way. We do forget the fact that man did not design marriage. God invented it. If he says, you shall leave your parents and be united to your spouse; he knows that it will yield lasting success. Failure to obey the command leaves the couple unfulfilled in their marriage relationship.

Conclusion

Thus so far we have seen that if at all God’s plan for marriage is to be fulfilled. The two must be willing to leave and cleave to their spouses. Nevertheless this involves taking an intentional decision to follow through if there will be lasting effects in the family.

Summary

³⁰ Mack 84-5.

³¹ Mack 85.

The two must be willing to listen and obey the biblical imperatives “to leave and cleave” if at all there is to be genuine bonding. This is not a quick fix process, but rather a lifelong undertaking of the two in marriage. The two must make a decision in the midst of the natural tendencies man has to resist change. Failure to take this decision to change will result in a dysfunctional family.

Lesson Two Questions

1. What does it mean to “leave and cleave”?
2. Why is it of crucial importance for the two to leave and cleave?
3. State some of the implications of leaving and cleaving.
4. Paul points out that the marriage union ought to be the _____ _____ _____ _____
_____.
5. Why is leaving and cleaving a difficult command to obey? Give at least three hindrances to this principle.
6. To what extent should young couples depend on their parents in shaping their family?
7. Why is it dangerous at times doing things the same way one’s parents of origin did them?
8. What does it mean to look at our parents objectively in relation to leaving and cleaving?
9. How can the two overcome becoming defensive in family discussions according to Mack?
10. In just a sentence describe this process of leaving and cleaving according to Mack. Marriage is intended to reflect a much higher purpose, state it.

Lesson Three: Roles for Husband and Wife in Marriage

In this lesson, we will observe God given roles in marriage and the dangers of abdicating one's responsibilities in marriage.

1. Challenges that Threaten Roles in Marriage

The challenges that confront marriage started way back in the garden of Eden. The fall distorted the way in which men exercised their headship in subsequent generations. The fall also distorted the way in which women exercised their godly submission to present day situation. It is the twisting of what God had intended for male - female relationships. Now women resist leadership with a bitter spirit while men rule with cruelty. This is part of the judgment for sin in Genesis 3:16; "your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you." There is conflict in every marriage relationship as a result of the fall. We end up having two self-centered individuals the wife desiring to prevail over her husband and control or change him, while the husband responds by domineering over her. The subversion of the roles does not in any way alter God's standards for a godly marriage that were in place from the very beginning before sin entered the world. "The conflict that Adam and Eve started will continue, accompanied by enmity, strife, crushing, and striking. But the curse of conflict is also laced with blessing and hope."³²

1.1 Conflict that Hinders to Live in Harmony

³² Winston T. Smith, *Marriage Matters* (Canada: New Growth P., 2010)140.

Let us do a brief study of Genesis 3 as the key to show us the beginning of conflict in the family. In verse 13 God asks “what is this that you have done?” In Verse 14 he pronounces a curse on the serpent, followed by pronouncements of enmity between the seed of the woman and the serpent’s offspring. In Verse 16, God adds pains on the woman and finally states the consequences of their sin to be manifested in the way husbands and wives will live. “Your desire shall be for your husband and he shall rule over you.” Chaos and conflict were the consequences. The curse, separation from God, also separation between man and other creation. He is to use extra effort or energy to harvest from the earth. It is trouble after trouble. Finally there is separation between man and woman; the husband to rule over his wife.

To rule refers to sovereignty. She will desire him, how? It is not a curse to desire. She had those affections even before sin came into the world. She was to be taken care of by the husband even in the innocent state. She came from the man which presupposes that Adam loved her as his own flesh. Adam had the headship position. The Bible says she was made from Adam’s rib. Therefore the interpretation for this concept to “desire” must be different from what we normally know it to be. It is something that touches all women. The same Hebrew construction is used in Genesis 4:7 where God speak out to Cain warning him over a possible danger in case he gives in or peace in case he refuses to be controlled by sin’s desire. “If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is for you, but you must rule over it.”

We notice sin’s desire to overpower Cain, but God exhorts him to master it. Sin was after him. Sin wanted to crush him, rule him, force him, or control him. This is the same thing for the woman. The woman no longer willingly wants to be under submission she wants to control the man. This is what she did from the beginning by taking powers into her own hands instead of listening to her husband she instead listened to the serpent. Women want to rule and men in turn oppress the women. This is where the two roles are in conflict. The husband wants to be king on the throne so does the woman. That is why it requires that the two in marriage relationship live by the spirit of God. Unless they are filled with the Holy Spirit, life in the home will constantly be a conflict (Eph. 5:18-21).

The wife will always try to assume control over the husband and home. Instead of the wife pursuing harmony in the home she puts on patterns that eventually influence a man to respond in an ungodly way. That brings negative effects in the way both respond to each other. The subversion of roles does not rule out the fact that there are biblical roles for both parties in marriage. Let us attempt to observe some of the roles the Bible prescribes for husbands and wives for marriages to function. Husband and wife role failure is of major problems compared to others.

2. Roles of Husbands and Wives

The classical text identifying roles in scripture is Ephesians 5:21-33:

It will be important to study this passage on marriage in the context of the entire letter. We will see that marriage is set within the larger context of God's end-time restoration of all things under the headship of Christ, which includes the bringing together of all things including believing Jews and gentiles, in the body of Christ, the church. Christ's relationship to the church, in turn provides the pattern for Christian marriage, in which the husband is appointed as the head (as Christ is the head of the church) and the wife is called to submit to her husband (as the church is to Christ).³³

2.1 The Role and Responsibilities, the Husband

In this section we will focus on what the husband is supposed to do in order to fulfill his God given responsibilities in a marriage relationship. There can be no oneness between the two without each of the two doing his part. This is more like job descriptions that are necessary for any organization to function and excel. It is impossible to have harmony in any institution where individual responsibilities are not stipulated. Any family to function in an orderly and God glorifying way, it should abide by the provisions that the maker provides. Our study will

³³ Kostenberger, Andreas J., and Jones, David W. *God, Marriage, and Family* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2010) 55-6.

concentrate on the three major roles provided for in the Epistle to the Ephesian church. The husband is his wife's leader, lover and liberator/sanctifier.

2.1.1 Call to be the Wife's Leader

This plan is arranged by God from the very beginning. Male leadership in marriage is ordained by God. It is not campaigned for. God put it in place at creation. He created the two from the very beginning with two major roles, "leadership and helpmeet" (Gen. 2:18). The roles are constitutional by God's making them male and female (Gen.1:27). By this he states the difference in roles. When we come to the New Testament, the calling to head is even clearer for the husband is to be the head of the wife just as Christ is the head of the church. He is to pattern his leadership after the Savior of the world. In 1Corinthians 11:3, Paul stresses the leadership role. "I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of the wife is her husband, and the head of Christ is God." The authority is God given as already stated above.

A comparison with Ephesians 1:22 and 4:15 further supports the notion... that "headship" entails not merely nurture (though it does that; see Eph. 5:29), but also a position of authority. This authoritative position of a man is a functional, not of intrinsic merit or worth on his part, but of God's sovereign creative will (and is perhaps reflective of God's authority in light of his revelation of himself as Father. Hence the husband's leadership, as well as the wife's submission, is to be exercised within the orbit of grace rather than legalism or coercion.³⁴

Therefore, it is not some kind of superior power exercised over the wife. Husbands are not in any way higher than the wives. Husbands are not consultants as though they are referent powers. Husbands are not the ultimate authority as some have abused this office. The wives are not simply depending on whatever information the man provides. It is a calling from God. It is

³⁴ Kostenberger, Andreas J., and Jones, David W. 59.

position of power granted by God. It is a position, one of status. That makes this calling one of importance. The husband has been delegated to be the head of his wife and family. He is the head just as Christ is the head of the church. This calls for excellence.

Christ cares for his church so should a husband be to his wife. Christ makes wise decisions for the church and so should husbands. Christ exercised servant leadership to his church (Mark 10:42-45). Jesus makes some fundamental remarks on leadership in that text. He shows his audience how the gentiles' rulers were exercising power over the people they led. They did it by making their subjects serve them. He instead commands the disciples not to do that. Jesus had already set himself up as an example of a servant leader. He told them that his coming was to serve his people. He did not come to be served. The husband in like manner is to serve his wife. He sets the pace for the family.

The husband is to coordinate the family just as Christ coordinates his church. Headship sets the pace for each part to function towards the same goals. The head has the responsibility to always be on the lookout for the best that beautifies the family.

The husbands must not abdicate their God given responsibility to lead neither should they at any time try to dominate which results in abusing their office. Headship cannot be independent of intimacy in marriage. Let us learn from the Savior, he does not simply command us to do things from his transcendental state, no, he is united to us. Christ is one with the church. The head is part of the whole, his body the church.

2.1.2 He is to be His Wife's Lover

The husband is called to love. He is commanded to love his wife. It is not a suggestion but a command. It should be done voluntarily. The husband must make decision to love his wife. He makes it with the goal of meeting his wife's need (Luke 10:25-37; 1Cor. 13:4-8). It is love modeled after Christ himself.

Love is one of the misunderstood word in a world we live in today. There are varieties of ways people interpret love. Some think of it to imply a proposal for sex or a statement implying to like someone.

What is love?

One definition of love is “a deep feeling of sexual desire and attraction” or “a strong positive emotion of regard and affection.” Is love an emotion or is there more to it than that? In 1 Corinthians 13:4-8 the Bible says that “Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, and it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, and always perseveres. Love never fails.” There seems to be a disconnection between what the bible says and what the world has changed the meaning of love to be. So where is the misconceptions about love rooted? The Bible infers that love is a choice and not just an emotion. The world tends to equate love with sex or a strong emotion. If love never fails then how is it that so many love relationships fail? I think the answer to the misconceptions about love can be found in how we define love. If love always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres, then what is it that most people define as love? The definition of lust is “a strong sexual desire” or “having a self-absorbed desire for an object, person, or experience.” This more describes what most people think of when they think of love. Love has been redefined to be the same as lust. It is more about me than about you. There are so many steps that we have gone through in this redefinition leading to misconceptions about love. But let’s get back to the original definition. Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud.³⁵

The love spoke of in Ephesians is 1Corinthians 13, is a love that is giving to another. In Ephesians 5:22-33, the word *love* is used seven times with emphasis put upon husbands to act in that manner towards wives. “Husbands have one overarching duty: to love.”³⁶ Every Christian

³⁵ *Biblical Counseling*, Web. 12 Sept. 2015.

³⁶ Smith 204.

has the duty to love in all relationship but the husband has been uniquely called to this responsibility. He stands with a higher call to make sure that as he loves everyone in the home develops the same attitude to love. “Where love is lacking, the husband must move to meet that need, especially for his wife. Likewise, he faces a unique temptation. He may sinfully choose to use his authority to serve himself instead of his wife and family.”³⁷

It is a love of self-sacrifice. Manner of this love is love of self-sacrifice, the love that Christ extended for his church to die for unworthy sinners. Christ did demonstrate this nature of love by going on the cross for his own. It is that unchanging love, giving your life for others willingly. Christ brought us salvation through sacrifice and he did not threaten. Due to the sinful tendencies men tend to love their wives on condition that they fulfill what the husband commands. They threaten their spouses. Christ did not threaten. Christ’s manner of love is revolutionary. It is absolutely the opposite of the world’s standards. It is a call to treat the wife with respect and dignity in a world where women have been treated like trash. She is to be treated with dignity because she is an image bearer just like man. She too was given the power to rule over creation. “Men and women are to rule in order to serve, and we are to serve through sacrifice. Jesus taught that we are not to rule like the gentiles leaders, but we are to serve with and through the humility of God.”³⁸

“From Genesis 1 and 2 (which we have already discussed at some length) it is apparent that the woman, like the man, is created in God’s image and is charged to fill and subdue the earth together with him (Gen. 1:27-28). As his “suitable helper” and partner in filling the earth and subduing it, and as his compliment provider by God, she is worthy of full respect and dignity and is to be cherished as his trusted companion and friend.”³⁹

The command has theological implications to it. When you turn to 1 Peter 3:7 men rejoice to learn that six verses address the wives. We forget that as we come to the seventh verse, Peter calls the husband to a higher duty. Failure to fulfill that duty results in forfeiting the blessing of answered prayers.

³⁷ Smith 205

³⁸ Allender 85.

³⁹ Kostenberger and Jones 29.

What is sacrificial love? Ephesians 5:25, “Just as Christ loved the church and gave himself: “giving is implied here. Giving oneself for the other. The husband ought to love his wife for what he can do for her not for what she can do for him. Christ loved us in spite of our attractiveness to meet our needs and to provide strength for us. It is not based on feelings. It is a giving, it is unconditional love. It is a love undeserved. “This is not based on romance as the world thinks it to be. It is dying to self. It is a redeeming love. It is not based on good looks as some have taken it to be.”⁴⁰ Your partner gets older each day and those good looks fade away. It is a love that seeks the interests of another. This kind of love can only be experienced by those who are in Christ.

This is the same love implied in the “adulterous”⁴¹ wife Gomer; where God tells Hosea to go and buy her back to himself. The idea of redemption is implied here. Husbands ought to exhibit the same type of loving relationship with their wives.

It is an active love that accomplishes a certain task. 1Corinthians 13 sets out to show us what this love does. “Each of its characteristics is a verb, meaning, it does something. This ability to love is given to believers in Christ because of the indwelling third person of the Trinity. No Christian husband can be excused for failure to love. The only exception would be when she acts in a manner of unfaithfulness, breaking her marriage vows.”⁴² That and only then does a husband fail to love sacrificially. It becomes so hard to realize who the leader is in a home where the husband lives a humble life. Such a husband may appear to be weak, but in the real sense, it is strength for him. A wife flourishes more when she feels secure and cherished by her husband.

Paul is telling the husband to have love patterned after the love of Christ. That is quite a high standard that requires the spirit of God and constant obedience on the side of the husband. God’s love was manifested in that he gave his Son to die for sinners (John3:16). When we read

⁴⁰ Please understand me, I am not saying that good looks are not necessary when you are choosing a partner for marriage. I haven’t met a man who cares less about a woman’s beauty. The point is that we should not make it the condition to love someone.

⁴¹ Just imagine buying back or forgiving your wife caught in adultery. That is one of the hardest decision a man could ever make in life. It is equally true of the wife. But the Lord shows us the same truth in his buying back sinners that once had adulterated their relationship to another husband besides God.

⁴² See footnote 35.

Philippians 2:8, the highly exalted Lord, emptied himself of all to give his life to save. He did this as an act of a servant leader who stoops low to raise the down trodden into glory. The Bible commands husbands to aim at demonstrating that kind of love for their wives.

Question: We know that husbands are to love their wives; should wives show similar love to their husbands? Surely this is so. So why doesn't Paul command wives to love their husbands rather than emphasizing their submission and respect? I believe Paul here is commanding each marriage partner to do what is *hardest* for him or her. Husbands are most tempted to dominate their wives, and thus are commanded to love sacrificially; wives are most tempted to look down on their husbands, so are commanded to submit to them and respect them.⁴³

2.1.3 His Wife's Sanctifier or Liberator

“That he (Christ) might sanctify her, having cleansed her by washing of water with the word so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish,” Ephesians 5:26-27.

It is a sanctifying love or purifying love: In vs. 26 we are told that Christ loves his church, he seeks to cleanse her, and he seeks her purity. In vs. 27 he uses the Greek word (*ENDOXYAN*) in all her glory as if she were a queen, to present the church in all splendor of holiness and virtue (without stain or wrinkle). Christ gives his life and dies for the church and seeks her purity. In John 13:10 Jesus said “the one who has bathed does not need to wash, except for his feet, but is completely clean.” It so happens that we get our feet dirty over and over again which calls for cleansing. When you turn to John 15:13 Jesus follows the same idea and says “already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you.” In this passage we observe the pruning process which represents a continuous cleansing. The husband has the responsibility to bring his wife to the source; the Word of God for constant purification. Husbands should not expose their wives to iniquity, or entertainment or expose her to sinful behavior. Husband make

⁴³ Pinkney, Thomas c. *Christian Marriage and Family*, edited class notes by Coty and Beth Pinckney Cameroon Baptist Theological Seminary, 2002.

sure she is by your side. The husband must create an environment where the wife has access to Bible studies and fellowship, situations that help her continue to grow in the Lord. Husbands should not sacrifice their wives to other men. Letting a wife work with fancy dressed men and she comes home to find you dressed in dirty clothing might be dangerous to your marriage. Be careful, God tells us to be out of there to protect her and not sacrificing her to the world.

Let me tell you it is challenging to live with a godly woman. I know how challenging it is for me, a wife who expects you to live what you preach. You may say I would have lived free instead of being a partner to such a woman. It is a good challenge to have such high standards. It is a blessing to have someone who checks on you. You are called to disciple her not for her to disciple you. The husband must be the theological teacher so that she may be purified. If you love your wife you will hate anything that defiles her. I heard of a man who had been married for eighteen years but depended on reading playboy magazine to stimulate their love, which is wrong, it is putting yourself to more temptations, be ready to confront, but be ready to protect her from sinful tendencies. The husband must seek after the perfection of his wife, just as Christ works towards perfecting his church, so should husbands do.

If you want to know how to be a husband, Jesus's love for us is the perfect starting point. Jesus' goal and motivation for his bride, the church, is only what makes her beautiful. He is not after some shallow Hollywood version of beauty but an inner beauty of purity and goodness that never fades or wrinkles. Jesus wants his bride to be beautiful and good through and through, to the core of her being. To accomplish his goal he lays down his life for her; he dies on the cross for her.⁴⁴

2.2 The Role and Responsibilities of the Wife

We already established from Genesis 1:27 that both male and female were created in the image of God. In Genesis 2:24 we get the purpose for which the woman was made. The Bible again says that the woman was made for man. That calls for a deep relationship expected between the two. In Genesis 3, the woman takes the powers in her hands and refuses to seek counsel from

⁴⁴ Smith 61.

her husband. She was disrespectful in a certain sense. The results were not good. God declares to the woman and man the following in Genesis 3:16 “your desire shall be for your husband, he shall rule over you.”

2.2.1 A Responsibility to Submit to her Husband’s Leadership

We discussed this earlier and said that a woman’s submission to her husband is not a practice that was decided upon by man. God is the one who commanded it. In Ephesians 5:22-24, Paul says “Wives, submit to your own husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands.”

Submission has been misunderstood in many circles to be a derogatory term. Some have taken it to be an oppressive practice. There are many debates over this practice; the call for wives to submit to their own husbands. Some think it is a means of putting down women under oppression. They think it is making the woman inferior. Some people say it presupposes a passive obedience to authoritarian rule, putting the women under servitude. Those are some among the misconceptions about this biblical command for wives’ submission.

The Bible presents it differently from what the world has taken it to be. In Colossian 3:18-19 and Ephesians 5:22-30 it is clearly taught that the wife is to submit willingly accepting to follow God’s order in 1Corinthians 11:3. It is not an imposition of rule. The idea is of one person arranged under or being assigned a role to play. This decision to submit is to be done as to the Lord. Submission is done in the same way as one submits to the Lord. It is a choice and remember husbands will flourish more when they sense respect from their wives.

Therefore submission must be taken to be a positive response coming out of a continuous confidence the wife has for her husband. She gains this confidence as the husband leads in the direction that honors the Lord through creating a safe environment for her to live. Think about the reasons why the church submits to Christ. It is because our Lord seeks after the interests of

the church. Christ prizes the church. Not only did he die for her, but he continues to love the church through cleansing her. For that matter the church responds with acts of gratitude for what the Lord has done. “The wife submits when she observes that undying love manifested towards her by the husband. We should not take the concept of submission negatively; even Christ the savior, who is equal with God in substance, submitted to his Father.”⁴⁵

Warning to a wife in case submission is not done in obedience to God. “Wives have a tendency of usurping the husband’s leadership position. There is also another way wives instead of being submissive resort to manipulation.”⁴⁶ “Submission is not obeying another: it is putting oneself under the other to serve the good of God for that person’s life.”⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Submission has an element of humility in it. Christ our Savior being of the same substance as God the Father submitted himself to his Father’s will. The Bible says he humbled himself, becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on the cross. There is nothing to lose in being submissive. As a matter of fact there is all to gain when one agrees to be stationed under another as God has commanded and so ordered society to operate in the same manner. We are talking of Christ the creator, not a creature in that sense. Christ will always be equal to the father. John 1:1 “and the word was God, uncreated but became man through the miracle of the incarnation. He made a choice to put himself under the Father. That choice did not make him less God.

⁴⁶ *Unlocking the Bible Truth, 9 Ways Women Manipulate Their Husbands.* While most women can easily come up with ways their men fail to show love for them, as wives we can often miss the plank in our own eye. In God’s goodness, He created women for relationship and influence, but as every woman innately knows, our influence can become a power that is used for selfish gain rather than the glory of God. Instead of going to God with our unmet needs and disappointments, our natural temptation is to resort to manipulation, the attempt to control or get our way through subtle, creative, and unfair means. In fact, it can be so subtle, that we often fool even ourselves; so let’s take a look at just nine common ways that we might be guilty of using manipulation, rather than turning to God’s Word and prayer to show us a better way:

1. “Leaky faucet”—complaining and nagging until he gives you what you want.
2. “Trial lawyer”—verbally out-talking him and shutting him down with her verbal skills.
3. “Blame game”—making her husband feel like he is responsible for her unhappiness, anger, or sadness: “If only you made more money, were home more, had a better job...”
4. “Clue”—expecting him to read her mind but giving little in the way of clues: Sighing, pouting, giving one word answers but when he asks what’s wrong, answering “nothing.”
5. “Smoke signals”—banging pots and pans around in the kitchen to make a point that you’re doing the dishes, without actually coming out and asking for help.
6. “Water works”—most men don’t like to see a woman crying so even when he thinks he’s right, he’ll usually soften to stop the crying.
7. “Angling”—withholding sex or using sex to get what she wants.
8. “Guilt trip”—laying guilt on him; telling him how disappointed she is in him.
9. “Performance trap”—making him feel inadequate: “We’re the only ones I know who haven’t been to Disneyworld™, etc.”

God gave Adam a wife to “help meet” his needs. She was designed for him and when she started doing things out of the lust of her own flesh the result was sin. What happened then is happening today. Husbands are to lead. If the wife refuses the leadership, there is a certainty of falling into sin and competing for the authority position. Refusing to be led is going against the biblical foundation of male leadership in the home. Society is arranged in the same way, we have the led and leaders. God has allowed it that way. This means that abdicating one’s position is going against divine design for marriage. Of course there are some exceptions to the command in case the husband tells his wife to do ungodly, unbiblical things, then the wife has the right to submit to the higher authority and disobey her husband.

2.2.2 She is her Husband’s Helper

While all of us are called to be helpers to others, the Bible places a special emphasis on this responsibility for wives. Genesis tells us that God realized it wasn't good for man to be alone, and that He decided to make a "helper suitable for him" (Gen. 2:18). It is interesting to note that the Hebrew meaning of the word *helper* in this passage is found hereafter in the Bible to refer only to God as He helps us. The fact that this same word is applied to a wife signifies that we women have been given tremendous power for good in their husbands' lives. God has designed wives to help their husbands become all that God intends for them to *be*.⁴⁸

Conclusion

If you find yourself guilty of some (or many) of these tactics in an attempt to get your husband’s attention, let me give this word of encouragement.

Know that *no temptation has overtaken you that is not common to woman (1 Corinthians 10:13)*. While manipulation does seem to be a particular temptation for wives, through the power of the gospel we can choose a better way! What has most helped me is the same thing that helped Sarah to become a godly wife for Abraham and 1 Peter 3:6 tells us her secret. Sarah put her hope in God and did not give way to fear.

⁴⁷ Allender, 118.

⁴⁸ “For more detailed study on the duties for husbands and wives, refer to Lessons Five and Six”, *Developing a Christian Worldview for Africa*, Kiwanuka, Emmanuel, MINTS: Miami International Seminary, 2015.

Marriages can flourish where each party exercises his/her roles. Abdication of roles will not allow the smooth running of the family. The two in marriage must know that all of the roles rotate around love and submission.

Summary

God designed the roles in family for the common good. It is a calling and privilege for the two to participate in the common good of their family. Harmony in the home can be threatened whenever there are conflicts in roles. The solution to that is to get back to the fundamentals of God's designed roles for the two if at all marriages are to bring glory to God. Couples must learn from the excellent Savior who gave himself to sacrifice for his enemies through submission to the will of His father. In the same way men learn to exercise that sacrificial love while women learn to submit just as Christ submitted without losing his identity.

Lesson Three Questions

1. Where in Genesis do we find the beginning of conflict in marriage?
2. What is the proper interpretation of "desire" in Genesis 3:16; 4:7?
3. What happens when the roles in marriage crush? What does scripture provide as a way of escape from this scenario?
4. What is that one classical text in the whole Bible that spells out the roles in marriage?
5. What are the three major roles for husbands provided for in the Word?
6. Why is it a "call" for the husband to be his wife's leader?
7. State some of the ways in which husbands have abused their positional power to be their wives' leaders.
8. What are the principal roles for wives in marriage?
9. When was the first time a wife refused to remain in her rightful position as a woman and what did she do exactly?
10. What are some of the misconceptions people have about wife submission to her husband and how would you respond to them from the word by just using one perfect example of submission?

Lesson Four: Expectations in Marriage Relationship

In this lesson we will be dealing with both realistic and unrealistic expectations that married people come within their relationship. We will observe the dangers and suggest recommendations to couples to help them keep their focus on the one who started marriage.

1. Expectations

Many newlyweds come into marriage with great expectations. They have dreams about a great fulfilling relationship. They live in a fantasy world until when reality hits and they get surprised. They come with sets of expectations and the list always varies from one couple to another based on their felt needs. I have interacted with a number of people including couples who have come to my office for premarital counseling over this issue. I have always asked them questions regarding their expectations in marriage. I have got answers ranging from realistic to unrealistic expectations based upon each individual couple. I have observed many living in a dream world and building castles in the air. Such couples need help. That is why it is necessary to have premarital counseling for couples intending to marry. In their small booklet, David Powlison & John Yenchko, deal with five questions to ask people getting into a marriage relationship. One of the question is:

Are you looking to marriage to make you happy or complete, to give you identity of purpose? When this happens, Christ is no longer your Lord in a practical way. (They follow this with an explanation). Marriage is a wonderful gift from God, but it cannot take God's place. Do you think getting married will provide meaning in your life? Direction? Security? Self-respect? Do you think marriage will remove a sense of despair, inadequacy, failure, bitterness, or isolation? Do you say to yourself, "If only I could find

a husband then I'd be happy," or "I can finally find love, acceptance, and security if I get married," or "My life is a failure unless I get married"? If so, you are asking too much for marriage.⁴⁹

That is exactly the mind that most people have when they think of marriage. They are putting marriage in the place of what only God can do for them. The truth of the matter marriage has many good things but it cannot take the place of God. No wonder that many have gotten into many disappointments by asking too much out of marriage. There is no doubt that marriage is a blessing from God but it should never be an alternative for the one who put it in place.

This matter should not be over looked by Christian leaders and counselors. Serious involvement is needed to help people planning for marriage to think through their expectations. One will be amazed at what people have as their expectations in marriage. This is not just for those who are intending to marry but also for those who are already married. Helping people think through and offering solutions can save many marriages. It can also be preventative for those who have not entered this institution.

1.1 Misconceptions for Marrying

People decide to marry specific individuals for various reasons. They come with various expectations regarding the roles they will play in their marriage. They confuse them neglecting the biblical system. One example I can use is for the two to think that love is all you need to build a lasting marriage: excepting that as long as I am loved, then everything will just fall in its place. A lifelong cleaving to one another cannot just be made up by one ingredient. Love alone isn't enough to make a marriage work. In my pastoral ministry I have encountered couples spelling out various reasons for why they have chosen to get along with a certain individual for marriage. Some of these expected reasons have turned out to be major causes of conflict in the home. Two young people falling in a sexual sin is no convincing reason for them to marry. They may have sinned out of infatuation and not real genuine commitment to each other. They may have married out of shame of being forced by the church's policy. I have witnessed many such

⁴⁹ Powlison, David, and Yenchko 3-4.

marriages falling apart over the years. Church leaders have a responsibility to help couples think through the reasons they give for marriage.

Marriage based on human reasons may end up in disaster. Marriage is a lifelong relationship. The two grow together. They purpose to live together each of them contributing to the relationship. A wonderful God glorifying marriage can only be realized over a period of time. One of the biggest mistake people make when going into marriage is holding back the basic Bible principles by unrealistic expectations.

1.2 “Why Should you Marry?”⁵⁰

In this section I will be commenting on Cunningham’s contribution to this subject in his article “the Christian Marriage Series.” We will be discussing a few of the examples he gives that people consider as of utter importance before they get into a marriage relationship. Here are some of the qualities people consider.

Attraction: it is not wrong to be attracted to someone. Nevertheless physical attraction can be dangerous to a marriage. People tend to consider the outside looks of a person instead of focusing on the true beauty that comes from the inner man. “Many men become interested in a certain woman because she looks "FINE!" He may like her general appearance, her nice legs, her breasts, her smile, her arms, or her behind. Basically a man may become interested in a woman because of her physical attraction and likewise a woman may become interested in a man because of his physical attraction.”⁵¹

Christians have to be careful with taking this physical attraction the standard upon which one makes a choice of who to marry. Looks are deceptive. The Bible says beauty is deceptive. Proverb 6:25 says “Do not desire her beauty in your heart, and do not let her capture you with her eyelashes.” Proverbs 31:30 says “Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain, but a woman who

⁵⁰ *Pursuing the Truth*, Web. 20 Sept. 2015.

⁵¹ *Pursuing the Truth*, Web. 20 Sept. 2015.

fears the Lord is to be praised.” So many people have been deceived and hooked into disastrous marriage because of physical attraction. I have always informed couples intending to marry about the point in life when their partners’ bodies will be disfigured. That beautiful body gets disfigured during pregnancy. The two must be warned of our fading beauty. Bad enough even super models lose their beauty at a given time in life. I Peter 3:3-4 “ Do not let your adorning be external-the braiding of hair and putting on of gold jewelry, or the clothing you wear- but let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is in God’s sight is very precious.”

There may be many things that can induce a person to become interested in another in the area of male female relationships. There is physical and intellectual attractiveness. Physical attractiveness is more than being pretty or handsome. It involves good grooming and good hygiene. Beauty comes from within and radiates outward. External beauty is only a cover that does not indicate what's inside. For example, a brand new body on a car with a corroded engine and torn seats is not a good car to have. However, a clean car with a good paint job with a working engine and clean seats is more desirable. My point is not to narrow your scope for a possible mate by looks alone.⁵²

Attractiveness is a relative quality. People have different qualities that make them attracted to their mates. What attracts one may not be for the other. Any person planning to marry should have a broader perspective on attractiveness than just looks. God has endowed people with a variety of qualities that matter more than mere physical attractiveness.

Sexual fulfilment: some people marry for reasons of sexual fulfilment. There is no marriage that can provide all the sexual fulfilment nor any other fulfilment one may need as we also comment in our opening remarks. I will be dealing in length on this subject when we come to sexual intimacy (Lesson Seven). There is some truth to this but each of the two must mutually be involved in working toward fulfilling his or her partner’s sexual needs. Having said that, “there should be compatibility between the two that indicates the possibility of a successful marriage. You can see very quickly here that good looks and good sex will not lead to a

⁵² *Pursuing the Truth*. 20 Sept. 2015.

successful and prosperous life together in marriage. Do not let sexual or psychological infatuation or romantic delusion lead you to get married. This may lead to a very unhappy marriage.”⁵³ Do not be interested in a person just for sexual satisfaction. You may be disappointed as time goes on. Don’t even be focusing on wealth as though marriage is getting wealthy. That interest based on what you see from outside will soon fade away. If you just lust after her, it will not take you long to lust after another. Your happiness should not be measured by what you see from the outside.

That is why the Bible commands that Christians marry Christians. The two must have a living testimony. The two must be born again for marriage to have a blessed ground to flourish. The two must subscribe to the same faith. The horizontal relationship between two people cannot be cemented in marriage if the vertical relationship with God of the two is non-existent. There are many other reasons that people have for marrying. We have just used a few to make the point. Nevertheless, all of them are deceptive apart from understanding marriage from a biblical perspective.

2. The Source of Expectations

“Dynamics of expectations: The starting point of it all is the heart (our thoughts and our belief system). It can be either God-centered or self-centered.”⁵⁴ The choice made between the two determines whether our expectations are realistic or not. We are all creatures made with a need to depend. Sin has taken advantage of that sense of need to redirect it towards selfish desires in humans. We do all have desire to be loved. We yearn for acceptance. It hurts so much if we are rejected. Man desires to be respected. People can commit suicide for having been demeaned. Man has a desire to be significant. Man works so hard to gain significance. Husbands struggle to toil for their families. Managers compete in their businesses for significance, to leave a name behind. This competition can be observed going on in families. They get motivated to do so at times due to the inner hidden pursue to meet their expectations. We do all this from our sinful hearts. When man sinned he lost all that he yearns to be. Bad enough we bring this along in our

⁵³ *Pursuing the Truth*. 20 Sept. 2015.

⁵⁴ Eyrich, A, Howard 84.

marriages expecting our spouses to meet our personal needs. The Bible says while we were still sinners Christ died for us (Rom 5:8). We cannot find acceptance outside Christ.

We force our way by expecting the other person meet our needs even when they are ignorant of what we need. The very moment they fail to meet our needs, we develop anger. We get frustrated. The Bible says in James 4:3 “You ask and don’t receive, because you ask wrongly.” Every person has some form of expectations. It doesn’t matter whether one knows them consciously or not. A person may deny to not having any expectations but the more you ask him some open ended questions he will admit to having some.

2.1 They Come from our Own Sinful Desires

These expectations come from our own desires as James states in James 4:1-2 “What causes quarrels and fights among you? Is it not this that your passions are at war within you? You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask.” We fight for things we want with all our strength. We pursue what we like to have.

This passage describes the root cause of destructive conflict: Conflicts arise from unmet desires in our hearts. When we feel we cannot be satisfied unless we have something we want or think we need, the desire turns into a demand. If someone fails to meet that desire, we condemn him in our heart and quarrel and fight to get our way. In short, conflict arises when desires grow into demands and we judge and punish those who get in our way.⁵⁵

Some couples struggle to have because they feel that they deserve more than what they have. We become victims of our desired needs. They control us because we think that by getting what we need, results in happiness. Imagine two people coming from two different backgrounds. They end up getting married and each one of the two comes with a life style that is the total

⁵⁵ Sande, Ken. *The Peace Maker* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 2004) 15.

opposite of his spouse. The two will begin a silent war. There are certain things that were normal for one that seem strange to the other. Such practices can turn into a battle ground. Let me provide an example of a young man who grows up with a house mother who never worked outside the home. He marries a wife who grew up with a working mother. Time comes for them to have children. The wife expects to have a house helper to care for the baby. The husband expects the wife to stay home and take care of the baby. The war begins.

Proverbs 13:12 says “Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but a longing fulfilled is a tree of life.” There is nothing wrong having hope. The problem comes when it is not fulfilled for a long time. Expectations not fulfilled turn the heart sick. When husbands and wives fill their hearts with vain hopes from this world, they end up having unrealistic expectations. The world we live in is full of disappointments. Solomon says earthly hope is meaningless, a “chasing after the wind” (Eccl. 2:11).⁵⁶ None of us is perfect, or predictable, so expect disappointed expectations. Man lives with these high expectations that overly consume the heart. That is what usually leads to some of us focusing on these expectations loving them far above our maker and our spouses. This is another sign of selfishness. A heart that is self-centered. We begin to seek ways that will feed our ego while marriage is intended for the two to mutually pursue what leads to growth in Christ.

We come with idols in the hearts. We come with our expectations. I want to reiterate that not all expectation are sinful. My point here is focused on sinful desires that couples come with and turn them into expectations. The very moment one fails to get what he/she expected, disappointments arise. We begin to blame our spouses for failure to meet our needs. We get back into the old “blame-shifting” scenario of our first parents. We blame then for failing us. We stand as judges.

We all do wrestle with idols in our hearts. Couples come with desires even though not all desires are wrong. It is not wrong to have good desires in our marriages but the problem is

⁵⁶ The Christian on the other hand, has an eternal hope, the end of it is truly the “tree of life” (Rev. 22:14). We wait for is amidst trials of this life, and our hearts sometimes grow sick longing for our Lord’s blessed appearing, which will signal the end of the age. We know that in the heavenly Jerusalem where the tree of life stands, there is life and we will be with the Lord face to face. No wonder the Bible shows us that marriage has a higher purpose. It is for the glory of God, it points us to the ultimate eternal union the believers have with their Savior.

making much of these desires and so turning them into some god. We make our partners into debtors when we demand to meet our needs. Sometimes we have unrealistic expectations from our spouses.

Expectations are not inherently bad. It is good to hope for the best in others, and it is reasonable to anticipate receiving understanding and support from those who are closest to us. But if we are not careful, these expectations can become conditions and standards that we use to judge others. Instead of giving people room for independence, disagreement, or failure, we rigidly impose our expectations on them. In effect, we expect them to give allegiance to our idols. When they refuse to do so, we condemn them in our hearts and with our words, and our conflicts with them take on a heightened intensity.⁵⁷

2.2 They Come from Failure to Understand One's Mate and Background

Do you know your mate well? Have you taken time to develop a deeper relationship with him/her? Are you interested in her/him more than what she/he does for you? These are among questions that lead one to begin dealing with unmet expectations. Africa has a diversity of culture due to a number of tribes. These differences can create conflicts because each culture comes with biases in marriage. We have racial differences that surface more when two different cultures meet in marriage. Understanding your mate involves learning his culture and be willing to talk about the differences. I have observed a shift in Uganda where interracial marriages are common in the twenty first century. This wasn't so in the past. Education has contributed to this shift. The gospel has also made some impact on the young generation to go transcultural in choosing one's mate. Nevertheless, the expectations have no respect for the educated. It takes one to know his/her mate to avoid constant conflicts.

You must have some awareness of your spouse's background before you get married. That knowledge helps. "A black man who marries a white woman should realize that chances are that his wife will not cook like mom or like himself. Again, these are only things that need to be

⁵⁷ Sande 107-8.

looked at before marriage so that they can be dealt with before the wedding day. However, race in itself should not be a factor in marriage.”⁵⁸

2.3 They Come from Unrealistic Imaginations

“Fantasy development, we imagine this object of our attention and hope it will fulfill our needs and make us feel wonderful. We allow ourselves to dream about it, and entertain the thought in our hearts.”⁵⁹ We imagine getting a perfect mate. We imagine getting a rich mate, this has become a general expectation for the African girl. Pursuing such fantasies is setting oneself for a marriage disaster. We forget that there is none perfect neither one (Rom.3:10-18). Beauty is not the one quality that makes for marriage. There are many beauties in the world that have failed marriages. There are many rich people with broken marriages. It is sad that we find more divorce cases among celebrities, people we assume to be models in society. The Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary defines *fantasy* as “a pleasant situation that you imagine but that is unlikely to happen.”

Fantasy is different from reality. We live in a generation of technology and the media offers us daily shows that depict superficial relationships and we covet them. We copy what they do and think that our marriage will flourish in case we act as they do in those shows. Once we fail, we seek out for another partner. We push for an imagined successful marriage which becomes an idol. We lust for it. The more we push, trying to make our imagination into a reality the worse we become. We end up not attaining our imagined results. That complicates the matter and we coil up because we have failed to attain that happiness we were looking out for. We then judge the rest for having failed us. It is all about the self. It doesn’t take long, we get back into the same cycle. The scripture is fulfilled in James 4:2-3 “you desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel.”

3. God-Centered Expectations Make a Big Difference

⁵⁸ Cunningham, William R. *The Christian Marriage Series*, Web. 20 Sept. 2015.

⁵⁹ Eyrich, A. Howard 84.

The “Westminster shorter catechism”⁶⁰ starts with the question “What is the chief end of man?” followed by the answer “the chief end of man is to glorify him and enjoy him forever.” Nothing can be meaningful apart from God. If any of our focus is tuned to some other person or object besides God, then that amounts to idolatry. Expectations that are focused on self are set for disaster. “Whatever we depend on, seek out, or organize our lives around other than God is what we worship instead of God.”⁶¹ Once we grasp this and our focus changes from thinking about what benefits me in marriage, then we have started to think about the other person. Everything we need in life and marriage is to be found in God. There is great potential in trusting him to get us through and get his will fulfilled in our lives.

God expects us to glorify him in our marriage. We are not to look to our spouses to meet our felt needs. We are to focus our energies on making sure that I as a partner in marriage fulfil my roles. I do so for the glory of God and for the good of my partner. It starts by “loving God with all of one’s heart, soul, mind and strength, and then loving our neighbor as we love our selves” (my emphasis). When worship changes from focusing on the idols of the heart (my unrealistic expectations) to the true object of our worship, then marriage sings. We will stop being judgmental if we learn that most of our blame shifting is a sign of a bigger problem we have with God. Marriage is not outside the control of God. He made it therefore he sets the pace for it. Expectations that are outside his will are only for selfish ends. We should let God continue to be master over what he has made.

“We are accustomed to dividing life into the spiritual and non spiritual, handing the spiritual things over to God and managing the rest by ourselves. There are certain areas that we like to consider outside God’s control, and marriage is one of them. But this command makes it clear that God should be at the center of it all. All barriers between the spiritual and non spiritual are broken down.”⁶²

⁶⁰ This is one of the puritan works intended to be a tool that introduces the basics of the Christian faith. This very literature is an expanded from developed by Thomas Vincent between (1634-78) and it has been very useful to the church to the present generation.

⁶¹ Smith 25.

⁶² Smith 26.

Couples must develop the attitude centered on God. If both husband and wife focus on pleasing God by living up to what the creator expect us to be, then marriages will be successful. We saw earlier how disappointing it is for failure to achieve one's expectations. The opposite will happen for those that focus on God. Instead of disappointments, we turn to God and be hopeful that his best will finally come out of my unfulfilled desires. He is our satisfaction. Life of service for others is fulfilling than waiting to be served. A common cause of frustration in this area is one's unmet needs. We wait for our spouses to serve us. The opposite is God's fulfilling means, serving one another. It is Christ's way of identifying with us. Serving my mate is what God calls for in a godly marriage.

This leads us to engage in service oriented actions according to God's will. Such a serving behavior reinforces our relationship with God and with others around us, and produces fulfilment and joy as we experience the communion and the unity that results. This leads us to respond in gratitude and praise to God, giving Him honor for His ways. A thankful and praising attitude, in turn, will make us focus on God rather than on ourselves, thus supporting and reinforcing this cycle again.⁶³

Couples must intentionally work towards living their lives for God and not for their selfish goals. They have to resolve making adjustments towards what glorifies God in their relationship. There is danger of wasting our time listening to all counsel and neglecting what the Bible commands. That gets us into all secular, humanistic ideas that are anti-scripture. Couples must develop genuine relationships within the fellowship of believers for accountability purposes. That is why church membership is a necessary good. We live in a world that offers us many choices everywhere we turn which calls for carefulness if at all we are to develop godliness.

Let nothing be done out of selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility we must put others first [my emphasis]. We should avoid the tendency of resorting to unbiblical decision during times when we fail to get what we expected of our mate. Turning to unbiblical solutions will

⁶³ Eyrich 84-6.

only make the matter worse. It might be sweet for a moment, but the consequences thereafter are always bitter and disturbing to the soul and disastrous to the family.

Couples must be willing to talk about their challenges or else they may be heading to rough waters. We will do more of this practice of talking when we come to the lesson on communication. Otherwise, my point is that the two should be willing to resolve their expectations. It takes the two to think through by putting on the eyes of scripture to come to lasting godly solutions. “Expectations can be very dangerous and the cause of much grief later. However each person should have a general expectation for marriage. This expectation should be to fulfill God’s will for their union, have a fulfilling marriage; or to expect to work hard at keeping the fire burning.”⁶⁴

Conclusion

Every one coming to marriage comes with a list of expectations consciously or subconsciously. It is natural that individuals have their own goals in life. The issue is not having or not having them, but, are they realistic; do they contribute to the wellbeing of that family. These are challenges that the two need to talk about if their marriage is to succeed God’s way.

Summary

We have observed that couples come with realistic and unrealistic expectations in marriage. These can turn into occasions of fights if not shared in the context of marriage. It is not sin to have expectations. There must exist openness to sort out what might be necessary for the health of the family. The couple must develop an attitude that is God focused if they are to expect unity in their marriage. There must be room to talk about their challenges but at the same time have a willingness to adjust where necessary to create harmony in their relationship otherwise unmet expectations even when they are realistic can create a wedge between husband and wife.

⁶⁴ *Marriage*, Web. 17 Sept. 2015.

Lesson Four Questions

1. Why do you think it is wrong to build marriage on one's expectations?
2. What ways can be used to help couples deal with expectations?
3. Why is physical attractiveness not a valid reason for choosing out a marriage partner?
Provide biblical basis support to your answer.
4. Why is it important for the two getting married be born again?
5. What is the primary source of expectations?
6. What is the primary passage that depicts the source of destructive conflict?
7. How do we become victims of our desired needs?
8. Is it always wrong to have expectations as marriage people? Explain your answer.
9. How can we avoid idolizing even the good expectations one may have for his marriage?
10. When worship changes from focusing _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ (_____ _____) to the true object of our worship, then marriage sings. (Fill in the missing words)

Lesson Five: Communication in Marriage

In this lesson we will be focusing on communication in marriage, considering both poor and good communication and the consequences of both practices. We will conclude by making suggestions for good biblical communication that enhances a godly marriage. This lesson is intended to provide the audience basic practices that would help improve communication in our marriages.

1. What is Communication?

It is simply sending out a message to someone with an expectation of response from the recipient. “What is effective communication? Generally, effective communication may be defined as the process of sharing information with another person in such a way that the sender’s message is understood as he intended it. Unless the sender and receiver have come to a common meaning, they haven’t communicated effectively.”⁶⁵

Communication is intended to bring peace and harmony between the parties involved. We need to recognize that after the fall, communication got broken down which necessitates restoration. If any family is to expect effective communication, sin must be dealt with in the first place. Man has many communication breakdowns. Sin does bring this failure in relationships and more specifically among married couples. It is very important that we deal with these differences and that can happen if there is effective communication.

Having said that we need to understand that communication is an activity that God started himself. Our God is a communicating God. We do well if we pursue the principles of communications he has laid down in scripture. These are basic ways that will help us improve on our communication to one another and more specifically in marriage as the main focus in this course. In his wisdom and plan God saw the need to restore man to himself. Reconciliation with God could not be achieved without the Holy One taking the initiative to create an atmosphere of good communication. It takes humility to restore good communication. Jesus humbled himself

⁶⁵ Mack, Wayne A. *Your Family God’s Way*. (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: P&R Pub., 1991) 55.

to the point of death on the cross to restore humanity to himself. The Bible says that even when we were still sinners, Christ died for us for the purpose of reconciling us back to God. In Christ we have dialogue because the tension that existed between God and man has been resolved. That is exactly what needs to be applied in the family. We are to imitate the Son who came down, incarnated with us to restore us to effective communication. God pursued the lost with a goal of saving them. We will see as part of this course that we have a responsibility of attacking the problem and not the person. We are to deal with the issues other than the person.

1.1 “Created to Communicate”⁶⁶

God spoke and there it was. He created all things by the power of communication. Any failure to communicate aggravates troubles in marriage. We have no excuse for not communicating as creatures made in the image of a perfect communicator. God spoke to man from the very beginning and gave him the gift of speech. We are all called to communicate even though “women were specifically gifted to communicate, to be more aware of social interactions, to be more empathetic and intuitive.”⁶⁷

Since communication is a basic necessity to all relationships, we have no option but to do it. God is not letting us guess what or how to communicate, he offers it to us through the pages of scripture. He gives us the best way to be good communicators as we image his son. His purpose has always been for his own glory. Our communication with each other must be focused on bringing the most glory to the one who made us. The words we use or the action we do as a means of communication must be for the glory of the one who made us. We should be using this gift of communication for his glory. We do it for the good of our families but ultimately for the one who put us into this planet.

Creation itself does speak as Psalms 19 says. There is that nonverbal speech that magnifies the maker. In the same way we are to do that as Christians. If creation speaks what about the people made in his own image. Ought we to be at the front stage to utter what pleases

⁶⁶ Fitzpatrick, Elyse. *Helper by Design*. (Chicago, Moody Pub., 2003) 161.

⁶⁷ Fitzpatrick 163.

the Lord one to another? Sin has affected us but there is no excuse because the Lord has redeemed us and lifted up the curse. We live in a state of being renewed in every aspect of life. That means that even our communication can be improved for God's glory. We have to be willing to minister to each other as husbands and wives for meaningful and God glorifying marriages. In order for such to happen communication lines must be improved in addition to other responsibilities in marriage. "Because of our stubborn inclination to pursue manipulative goals and our remarkable ability to disguise them as worthy objectives, we must sustain a determined openness to God's Spirit convicting us whenever we unwittingly shift from ministry to manipulation."⁶⁸

1.2 Why Communicate?

God has designed communication as a means of bringing people together. People get bonded through communication. This bonding must take place on two levels, "emotionally and physically."⁶⁹ It is a sad situation to see people living together as a couple while they are emotionally distant from each other. The two have a responsibility to work towards being closer to each other beyond sexual union. Having good sexual experience is no guarantee that the two are united. They must develop a deeper feeling for each other, a unity of purpose in mind and heart. As some behaviors threaten this type of pursuit, we will now consider them.

In this section I will be using Mack's work on communication as a basic reference. Mack has done more study on this subject than any other person I have read. He spends eleven of fourteen chapters of his book "*Your Family God's Way*"⁷⁰ dealing with the subject of communication. There are at least two main methods of communication; the nonverbal and verbal communication.

⁶⁸ Crabb, Larry. *The Marriage Builder* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Pub., House, 1992) 66.

⁶⁹ Mack, *Your Family, God's Way*, 56.

⁷⁰ This is one of the most comprehensive studies on communication I have ever read about. Mack does a superb job to get into the details of communication. The way he treats it manifests the importance and the part that communication plays in a relationship. I will urge you to get this volume if you don't and read for yourself.

2. Nonverbal Communication and its Effects

Mack calls nonverbal communication “I heard what you didn’t say... and that there are many pitfalls in communication as well as many aspects of good and edifying communication.”⁷¹ It is a form of communication where a message is sent without saying any word. In Genesis, we encounter our first parents living together while naked and without fear of shame in their innocent state. When sin entered the world they begin to hide from God. They hid away from face to face communication. After sin, they discover that there was something wrong with them which was not so in their innocent state. This can be applied to our marriages; betrayal of your mate leads to shame. Cheating or refusing to share with your mate brings a sense of shame. Even if the offender hides the truth from his/her mate, the unspoken truth can be observed in our action. Nonverbal communications is so powerful. It is very possible to send a message to your mate without saying a word.

Since much communication occurs in a nonverbal way (Some experts go as far as stating that 80% of what is communicated is nonverbal), one of the most common communication problems people encounter is a misinterpretation of the words spoken due to a contrasting non-verbal message. This is the typical case of the actions that speak louder than a thousand words.⁷²

Gestures can communicate a message so do facial expression, smiles, yawns and dress. I personally struggled in my marriage over what to put on for Sunday. Being a pastor meant setting a good example the way I dressed. It all had to do with my color coordination. My wife is a color coordination guru. She will tell you right away that the tie doesn’t match with the shirt or slacks. That bothered me for some years not just weeks or months. I am saying this to make the point of nonverbal communication. At first it bothered me for I cared less what I put on as long as it was clothing. I didn’t know how much it would affect my image so is my relationship with my wife. Imagine fighting over the set of clothing on a Sunday morning and refusing to accept her counsel would create communication barrier for both our relationship and the people I

⁷¹ Eyrich 97.

⁷² Eyrich 97.

preached to. As I look back to those years of my stubbornness, my wife had to be patient to sit under my preaching watching my uncoordinated colors. That alone could affect her attention during my preaching. Later on as the years passed, I made up my mind to change and I started to coordinate my colors. Even though this happened, I decided never to leave for church before standing before her and observe her nonverbal communication. Her facial nonverbal communication tells me if at all my colors are well coordinated or not. Our communication changed a lot in that area and through it I learnt much about color coordination to the point of helping others do the same. Do I do it to please her? Partly, but more so that we may live in harmony for the glory of God.

I have noted some Christians who miss Sunday worship while they are more committed to their jobs. That alone sends a message which says that one's work is more important than Sunday worship. Actions speak louder than words.

2.1 Silent Communication

Couples have a responsibility to watch out for silent communication lest they fall prey to the enemy and end up losing their marriages. Such can also threaten peace in a home. The older marriage becomes, the more the two begin to establish how each one of them sends a message. People can use body parts to express something. Someone can send an affection message without even saying a word. These are areas we need to be sensitive to for our own good as couples. Some people use their eyes, others ears or head. Learn your mate, we are different and uniquely made for the glory of God.

2.2 Doing the Best to Communicate Effectively

Couples are not simply called to communicate, but to communicate effectively. There is power to nonverbal communication. "God's nonverbal communication to us through the cross is the most powerful communication you could imagine."⁷³ It was through this that the Lord powerfully demonstrated his love for us. In the same way couples can manifest their love for

⁷³ Mack, *Your Family, God's Way*, 59.

each other through nonverbal communication. Husbands can easily minister to their wives by living a servant leadership lifestyle. The husband's willingness to sacrifice for his wife is evidence for love so powerfully communicated. Whenever we begin to think or plan the best for our mate, we will be sending out that nonverbal communication to them.

Each member in a family must use the available means to create a state in which her/his mate gets to trust him. The better we communicate or do things for our mate that make them significant, the more we bond. Let me put it this way, in John 12:32 Jesus said "when I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw all people to myself." He was pointing to his exaltation state. We exalt our spouses, in return we get closer to them. When God is honored and put in his rightful place in our lives, our worship for him becomes meaningful. We begin to enjoy him more and more. We know quite well that we were made to glorify him and enjoy him forever. In the same way we can enjoy each other by lifting our mates through effective communication. When we begin to treat them honorably, they in turn respond with joy. "Our reactions to others encourage certain responses on their part, whether good or bad."⁷⁴

2.3 Possibilities of Misunderstanding Nonverbal Communication

The dilemma comes when we misunderstand what might be communicated. It is possible to draw wrong conclusions. That is why it is important to speak. By asking one is helped to avoid making wrong judgments. If we fail to ask, we normally end up responding to nonverbal communication with a wrong action. Sin has affected us to the point where we tend to be quick in figuring out the meaning of a nonverbal communication. We are prideful creatures that think that we are right when making assumptions well as in the true sense, our interpretation is wrong in most cases. Each couple must proactively work on this for their own good and the good of the society they live in.

⁷⁴ Mack, *Your Family God's Way*, 62.

3. “Actions Speak Louder”⁷⁵

This calls for readiness to face the truth in nonverbal communication state. We must convey what we really want communicated. Couples must avoid denying the truth about nonverbal behavior if at all harmony is to be established in families. Sin has affected man to the point where he denies the truth. In marriage, the two must learn to face the truth as it is. From the very beginning of time man has been denying the truth or at times blame-shifting. We are creatures who deny even the obvious. It is easy to tell someone “I am fine” when in reality the opposite is true of you. Husbands and wives play this kind of game thinking that they are right in doing so.

Renaming or relabeling our feelings is another way we evade the truth about them. Instead of acknowledging that we are very bitter, resentful, or angry, we use euphemism such as, “I’m just concerned,” or “I don’t understand.” To protect ourselves from unpleasantness, we minimize the seriousness of what we are experiencing. We may even lose touch with our true feelings, insisting that we’re not annoyed, irritated, or angry, when indeed we are. ... To communicate effectively with other family members, you absolutely must be honest about your thoughts, desires, and emotions. Not that you should necessarily express all of them to the rest of your family. But you must express them to yourself, to God, and perhaps to another godly person who may help you deal with them rightly (Gal. 6:1.2; Heb.3:12, 13).⁷⁶

3.1 Judge when to Explain and be Cautious when Interpreting Nonverbal Communication

Nonverbal communication requires care before interrupting it. “Love puts the best possible interpretation the other person’s behavior. Until proven wrong, love assumes the best rather than the worst. Love doesn’t go around looking for insults and offences. Love recognizes that the same behavior may mean different things in different circumstances.”⁷⁷ Such situation call for

⁷⁵ Mack, *Your Family God’s Way* 69.

⁷⁶ Mack 71.

⁷⁷ Mack 73.

engaging into asking for “clarification.” It is not right to simply judge by what we see. Love is patient and calls for taking time to ask the person for clarification before making a final interpretation of nonverbal communication.

When you meet someone with a sad face, don’t judge right away that there is something wrong between the two of you. If the husband is sad, it is no sign that he has a grudge against his wife. Mack uses a living example of Jacob and Esau in the Old Testament. Jacob assumed that his brother was still bitter at him upon his return from his uncle Laban. Jacob tried to manipulate the situation due to his preconceived idea about his brother. He went to the point of interpreting his brother’s actions not knowing that Esau had put the whole matter behind him. It wasn’t until “clarification and explanation helped Jacob and Esau to avoid misjudging each other’s action.”⁷⁸ We observe that the two took time to clarify and explain their position and actions. There is more power in what we do than what we say out loud.

4. Verbal Communication

God calls us to speak too. He gave us the mouth to communicate and speak what builds up. “Our mouths are to be used to bring cheer, to turn wrath, to establish friendship, to commend knowledge, to sustain the weary, to give encouragement, and to promote healing.”⁷⁹ Proverbs 31:26 says the godly woman opens her mouth with wisdom and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue. This means that she uses her tongue to train. She takes time to discern, think through issues. She communicates. The more one shares, it leads into promoting dialogue, harmony, peace, closeness and openness.

It is unhealthy to not speak to each other in marriage. Talking with each other reduces tensions. Fears are overcome when we talk with each other. The mind gets lightened when we release stored information. Counsel cannot take place if we vent unresolved issues. We can find help through sharing our concerns, troubles, joys and questions. Avoiding to discuss issues that

⁷⁸ Mack 76.

⁷⁹ Mack 80.

trouble our relationship in marriage makes the matter worse even though we need to do this at a right time.

Sometimes we may never know how we hurt others by keeping silent. One simple phrase expressing our hidden non-verbalized thought about another can open up a new step in a relationship. Failure to talk about these serious issues that affect our marriages might lead one's relationship dysfunctional. It is unhealthy to live in a relationship where one's spouse never comes to know what his mate is thinking or planning. It is equally unhealthy to live in a relationship where one never say thank you to his spouse. A state of no appreciation for one's spouse. People need to hear those words of appreciation when they do the good. We do encourage others by verbalizing it out to them (Phil. 1:3, 5; 4:10; 1Thes.5:14; Phil.2:3; Rom.12:10).

4.1 Avoid Over-Talking

It is commendable to talk as we have observed above nevertheless couples must control their talking. It is not always wise to keep silent but when one talks: be careful to not overdo it. It has been said that too much of anything is bad too. Over talking can be dangerous too in the home. Proverbs 10:19 "when there are many words, transgression is unavoidable." Proverbs 12:23 "he who despises his neighbor lacks sense, but a man of understanding keeps silent." Proverbs 20:19 "a gossip tells secrets, so don't hang around with someone who talks too much." Proverbs 17:27-28 "whoever restrains his words has knowledge, and he who has a cool spirit is a man of understanding. Even a fool who keeps silent is considered wise; when he closes his lips, he is deemed intelligent." Proverbs 17:9 "he who repeats a matter separates close friends." So "over talk can destroy friendship, hinder marriages, and cause parent-child relationship to deteriorate."⁸⁰

People who are characterized by over talk always take control over the conversation. They are selfish and proud. They always front their views. They are always defensive and trying their best to justify their views and ideas. They seldom allow discussions from their spouses.

⁸⁰ Mack, *Your Family, God's Way*, 99.

They always have an answer and justification for their actions. They are good at comparing their marriages with other couples. When one of the spouse raises an issue for change, the over talker jumps right in to show that their relationship is much better in comparison with family X: “Don’t you realize we are far better than our neighbor.” He says this simply to shut her down from making any more demands. He may even say: “well, you don’t even appreciate what I do for you as my wife.”

4.2 Keeping Lines of Communication Open

Ephesians 4:15, 25, 29: “Rather speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ.... Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one another.... Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear.”

Keep being men and women of integrity and honesty. In marriage, husbands and wives must be determined in the name of Christ to be men and women of integrity and honesty. It is destructive to families to live with lies. No falsehood is healthy for a godly marriage. Falsehood will block good communication. The Bible is clear that we all lie and deceive (Jer. 17:9) and that in sin we were conceived (Ps. 51:5; 58:3) and that out of the heart proceed evil things (Mark 7:21-22). That means that none of us has ever been absolutely honest in living. We have a major obligation to control the tongue. It is one of the hardest parts on our human bodies to guide. This is what Mack says about this “instrument”⁸¹ as he calls it. “That lying is universal vice of the pagan world. Among the ancient pagans, as among the moderns, it was almost universally practiced.”⁸² That is bad news, but we have a new nature and a new Spirit that enables us to come out of that mire of sin and begin to practice truth and honesty. That is why I said earlier

⁸¹ Mack, *Your Family God’s way*, 133. Mankind has never invented an instrument with more destructive power than the human tongue, but that is only half the story. That same tongue can be an enormously positive, constructive force in your family life. Words can build up people (Prov.18:21), bring blessing to an entire city (Prov.11:11), relieve anxiety (Prov.12:25), produce joy and satisfaction (Prov.12:14), bring comfort and encouragement (1Thess.4:18), diminish anger and strife (Prov.15:1), and bring delight and pleasure to God (Eph.4:30; Mal.3:160. A soothing tongue is a tree of life (Prov.15:4;’... the tongue of the wise brings healing” (Prov. 12:18).

⁸² Barnes’ Notes 2003.

that to live such a life of truth and honesty is by appropriating the provisions of grace we have in Christ. Left on our own, we can accomplish nothing. In Christ we can move from failure to godly communication. Whatever it takes, couples must avoid all falsehood.

“Many Christians lie to each other to avoid a confrontation or to avoid hurting someone or themselves. A typical example of this type of lie is when someone refuses to address a problem (typical “nothing’s wrong” response). Lying, however never resolves a problem, but only compounds it with another.”⁸³ It is sad that the more people get into practicing falsehood; truth gets to be hidden. It is only truth that will bring peace within the family.

“By affirming the truth to your mate.”⁸⁴ We are to affirm the truth to our mate. This truth must be spoken in love even when it seems to be hurting. We are called to pursue honesty at all costs no matter what it takes. We are members of the same body. Who is my neighbor? Before I seek out for the person next door, I first affirm truth to my wife or husband. Communication is an obligation, a command from the Lord. God expects us to speak to one another, but not simply speak anything we feel like. We are to speak the truth. “If the human body is to function as a unit, every part of the body needs to know what the other parts are going to do.”⁸⁵

Keep focusing on building up not destroying your own house. We are to speak that which builds up the other. The admonition in Ephesians 4:29 must be taken seriously as Mack further says; “merely talking to one another isn’t enough. What is needed is good talk, which blesses rather than blasts, helps instead of hurts, and builds up instead of tearing down.”⁸⁶ We must pack out speech with truth. What is truth to you must be shared with your spouse. It is sad to deceive one’s spouse: it is similar to deceiving yourself as the two have become one flesh. That means speaking lies to your own flesh is an absolute betrayal of your own family.

⁸³ Eyrich 102.

⁸⁴ Fernandez, Steve, *The Basics of A Christ-Centered Marriage* (Vallejo: Exalting Christ Pub., 2001) 26.

⁸⁵ Mack 134.

⁸⁶ Mack 134.

“By not gossiping about your spouse.”⁸⁷ A spouse who gossips about her mate is dividing up his house. Do not expect that type of family to survive. It is like tearing a piece from the whole. When you gossip, you are telling others your own self. There is wisdom in Proverbs 11:12 “Whoever belittles his neighbor lacks sense, but a man of understanding remains silent (holds his tongue).” We all know people who love to hear gossip and can’t wait to spread it. Spouses must have respect for each other. Pride motivates people to gossip. Why? We are creatures in sin that look for ways of elevating ourselves. The more one gossips about his mate, the more he reveals the secret things about his family. It is fraudulent. The person is making himself too cheap unknowingly thinking that he is tarnishing his mate’s character. Remember you are one body. We should not give occasion to gossip neither should we entertain it when someone begins to gossip about his/her mate. So a wise person holds his peace because he knows that he is no better than his spouse and also refuses to spread it because of love. Love does not seek to harm her neighbor. Gossipers are good at pretending before people during your presence. When you show them the back they speak all the evil about you. They are betrayer in a sense. It is sad for spouses to betray each other.

By readiness to speak the truth to each other even when it hurts. Medicine is never a sweet thing to a patient. When rightly used, medicine brings healing to the body. It brings relief. It restores the body to its normal functional state. When swallowing a pill, there is an unfavorable, unpleasant feeling it brings so is truth that brings healing. It is not what we want to hear because by nature we are sold to sin. Anything that goes against our sin nature creates discomfort in our souls. The bible says “You shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free” (John 8:32). Lies will keep us in bondage; truth will release us to unimaginable heights of joy in the Lord and harmony in the home. Unspoken truth will keep us in bondage that is why it is necessary to let it out. It is like knowing the directions to your final destination but you keep it to yourself thinking (“well, I am not the one driving”) when you get lost, you too will be delayed. Not until when you speak out to the driver, will you be able to get to your destination.

“Sometimes as the old saying puts it, “the truth hurts.” However, it must be stated that dishonesty and hiding what we are from others will do more harm. Eventually, people

⁸⁷ Fernandez 26.

and relationships are hurt more by devious and deceit than by the truth appropriately spoken. Disclosing the truth may be like having a necessary operation. The pain is real, but the result is wholeness rather than death. ⁸⁸

Conclusion

We have observed how important communication is in marriage. When communication breaks down, it's difficult to run the family because of the disconnect that arise from it. Therefore we need to constantly work on this art of communication for health marriages that will glorify God since we serve a God who is a communicator himself. God is truth, therefore, let the truth be exercised in all of our communication.

Summary

Communication is very key to a health marriage. Most communication that takes place in the world is nonverbal which calls for caution on the side of the recipient. It is a common mistake to misinterpret this type of communication. That calls for patience and being able to ask questions to avoid giving wrong responses to a nonverbal communication. The same applies to verbal communication. There is a need to be more a listener than a speaker. The goal is to glorify God as we work toward building marriages other than destroying them. Communication can affect all the other areas or aspects of marriage.

Lesson Five Questions

1. What is the intention of communication?
2. What broke down man's communication with God? How is this communication restored?
3. Communication is not an option in all human relationship. Respond to that statement.
4. Why do we communicate according to Wayne Mack?

⁸⁸ Mack 135-6.

5. Simply state some of the nonverbal communication expression stated in the lesson that couples have to look out for and treat them with importance.
6. What is one of the best ways a husband can manifest his love to his wife through a nonverbal communication?
7. How do we resolve the possibility of misunderstanding nonverbal communication?
8. How should we use our mouths according to Wayne Mack?
9. It is alright to talk and it is commendable to do so but we must control our talking by avoiding _____ (provide the passage that provides wisdom in this area).
10. How do we keep lines of communication open in marriage?

Lesson Six: Necessity of Communication in Resolving Conflicts

In this lesson we will attempt to understand the advantages that rise from conflicts in marriage. This will be done from a biblical perspective. We will also deal with the necessity of honesty in resolving conflicts through good listening.

1. Conflicts, an Opportunity for Growth

Conflicts are inevitable in marriage. None of us live in world devoid of conflict. If that is the case, then there is no escape. We face it, we expect it as couples and we can use it as an occasion for growth. Conflicts can be opportunities for maturity in our homes. They can be catalysts for bonding; they can be used to cement oneness. What happens when two in marriage disagree, get in a fight, have misunderstandings, and get angry at each other? Everyone who gets married or plans to marry will face conflicts. Just be ready to use conflicts for the glory of God. The important question to ask when we face conflicts as believers is “How does one use conflict as an opportunity to demonstrate the love and power of Jesus?”⁸⁹

As couples continue to live together, they will learn to draw on God’s grace each day and deal with conflicts in a biblical way. We grow as believers through conflicts. It is through this that the two develop godly character traits that will help them stand against all kinds of temptations.

Maturity is the ability to control anger and settle differences without violence. It is patience. Maturity is perseverance; the ability to sweat out a project or situation in spite of heavy opposition and discouraging setbacks. Maturity is the ability to face unpleasant and frustrating, discomfort and defeat without complaint or collapse. Maturity is being big enough to say “I was wrong.” And when right, the mature person need not experience the satisfaction of saying “I told you.” It is making a decision and stand by it. It is dependability living in peace with what we cannot change.⁹⁰

⁸⁹ Sande, Ken 15.

⁹⁰ Debinski, Craig with Debinski, Pamela. *Excellent Marriage* (Woodruff SC: Timeless Texts, 2001) 103-4.

Therefore we must admit that we live in a world of conflict if at all we are to make progress in handling them. If we do so, then we will use them as “redemptive” opportunities for our maturity in homes and Christian lives as a body of Christ.

1.1 Christian Maturity Determines How to Approach Conflicts

The immature spouse thinks that he can take control of his partner. If a conflict is to be resolved there must be a willingness to accept and employ good communication. There is no better way of resolving conflicts than through godly communication. It is not just godly communication, but honest good communication. The two in conflict must also express a desire to resolve the conflict. It will defeat the purpose if one of the parties involved does not show a willingness and desire for change. It must be used to build up. “The Bible tells us that conflict doesn’t have to be destructive. In fact God promises to use conflict to expose and eradicate sin and help us grow in love.”⁹¹

1.2 “A Biblical View of Conflict”⁹²

The Bible gives an explanation why conflicts occur and how believers are to handle them. Sande does also give us a summary of what “conflict” means:

“A difference in opinion or purpose that frustrates someone’s goals or desires - this definition is broad enough it includes innocuous variations in taste, such as one spouse wanting to vacation in the mountains while the other prefers the water front, as well as hostile arguments, such as fights, quarrels, lawsuits, or church divisions.”⁹³ He further gives us four primary causes of conflicts:

⁹¹ Smith 137.

⁹² Sande 29.

⁹³ Sande 29-30.

- a. Some disputes arise because of misunderstanding resulting from poor communication (see Josh.22:10-34).
- b. Differences in values, goals, gifts, callings, priorities, expectations (we dealt with some of these in the Lesson Four), interests, or opinions can also lead to conflict.
- c. Competition over limited resources, such as time, money, is a frequent source of disputes in families, churches, and business (see Gen. 13:1-12).
- d. Many conflicts are caused or aggravated by sinful attitudes and habits that lead to sinful words and actions (see Jam. 4:1-2).⁹⁴

Since conflicts are inevitable and opportunities for our growth, we should approach them with grace. They may not all be beneficial nevertheless they come our way. Couples are called to be actively involved in handling them. “When handled properly, disagreements in these areas can stimulate productive dialogue, encourage creativity, promote helpful change, and generally make life more interesting.”⁹⁵

Conflicts must be handled in ways that glorify God. We must aim at one major goal in life, glorifying God in every situation. We must depend on God’s instruction in handling conflict. We have no other higher standard to imitate other than God. He has showed us in the pages of scripture how to do this. The three opportunities, glorifying God, serving others and growing to be like Christ must guide us when faced with conflict in our marriages.

1.3 The Challenge to Live in Peace

God has called us to peace. Marriage should be a place of peace. God is a God of peace. Christ is our peace. He has become our peace and solved that which used to bring enmity between us and our God. Once the two of us in marriage have resolved our differences with God, we are

⁹⁴ Sande 30.

⁹⁵ Sande 30.

then called to live at peace with each other. That finally leads to have peace in our own lives as individuals that live by God's grace. When peace is threatened the Bible calls on the victims to "make peace." Peace is something we make and get involved in as believers.

Let us now concentrate on some basic marriage builders when couples face conflicts. The purpose of this section will be on some of the sinful patterns that threaten oneness and how to overcome them.

1.4 The Challenge to Control the Tongue

Scripture gives us stern warning about the tongue as we observed in Lesson Five. James 3:5-8, "So also the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great things. How great a forest is set ablaze by such small fire! And the tongue is fire, a world of unrighteousness. The tongue is set among our members, staining the whole body, setting on fire the entire course of life, and set on fire by hell... But no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison."

The tongue speaks hasty words without taking any thought of the outcome. There are many times we speak whatever comes to our minds without thinking of the consequences. It is through such that we hurt those around us. Couples make statements that hurt each other in the process. We criticize others without taking thought of the outcome. We lie and get involved in all kinds of deceit: we speak words that give a false impression of reality. We gossip with our tongue. "Gossip is both the spark and the fuel for conflict."⁹⁶ We already looked at Ephesians 4:29 where Paul commands us to not let any unwholesome talk come out of our mouth. The tongue is a challenge. Words can be tools for building or for breaking relationships. We must be careful how we use them. This brings us to the nature of communication that builds up marriage.

⁹⁶ Sande 121.

2. Honesty Promotes Oneness

The way spouses communicate can either help nurture the relationship or create more problems. It is not just enough to simply resolve problems in marriage: we need to work towards helping them learn how to communicate effectively. People can drift apart in marriage. This can happen any moment in life. Satan is not resting; he is working to destroy marriages. That is why it is no surprise to see people who have lived together for decades filing for divorce. Where there are people, expect conflict and fights. That is why honesty must be developed where by couples begin to share their thoughts, aspirations, concerns, threats, goals and the like. It is a common weakness in marriage where you find the two judging each other instead of working towards trying to understand each other. “The kind of honesty that reflects God’s love requires sharing of the right information in the right way, a way that leads to oneness and growth.”⁹⁷

In Genesis 2, we come to glimpse with the creation of Eve out of Adam and the two are brought together as one flesh. Paul uses the same figure in Ephesians 4:25 of belonging to one another. We are the same body which illustrates oneness. There is intimacy involved here. There is trust. The two in marriage can develop trust over time as they learn to communicate. The idea is that the body cannot function effectively without having a system that promotes information sharing. In this case it is about right information. When one part or some parts stop to function, the whole body suffers. When the blood stops to flow in the system, we get a heart attack. When the blood cells get destroyed, we develop all kinds of infections and bodily weaknesses. In the same way, if one of the spouses stops to share vital information for the nurturing of that particular marriage, the relationship gets affected.

2.1 Learning from the Original State of Honesty

Genesis 2:25 paints a great picture of a state of honesty and oneness. The two, Adam and Eve had nothing to hide from each other neither from God. They shared information in a perfect manner without disguising it. When sin enters the world, in the human race in particular, man

⁹⁷ Smith 95.

goes into hiding; hiding from God and from each other. There is no more safety. That is where concealing information from each other begins.

There are things we don't like to face about ourselves, things we certainly don't want on view to others, before the fall, Adam and Eve, with nothing to hide or avoid, knew nothing of their feeling. Nakedness without shame is a picture of complete openness, honesty and safety.⁹⁸

Where sin is, it makes it hard to live openly before God and other people. Sin hinders us to know others better and ourselves of course. As it was with Adam and Eve in their fallen state hiding from God, so we are when it comes to facing the truth. The truth finds no room in our lives. Sin and truth are never allies. We come with this tendency in our homes with the fear to be exposed. Truth has the power to expose our sin but also to offer us the solution. Nevertheless we keep on hiding forgetting that such an attempt makes the matter worse for us and our relationships.

Hiding will not solve the issue because truth is inescapable. "Because we are made in God's image, we can't fully escape knowledge of ourselves and of God's purity, holiness and wrath."⁹⁹ That is where conflicts arise. We want to communicate the truth. We want to share the truth with our spouse but falsehood comes first. We have that burning desire to do what is right but sin is there before us (Rom.7:15-20). Christian husbands and wives want to be as clear as they can in their communication but we avoid taking that step.

2.2 Learning from our Redeemed State

As Christians we learn to communicate as believers. Jesus has solved the dilemma man had in his state of sin. The one time giving of himself for the sins of the world opens a whole new chapter in the history of man. Christ did not come on a mission to destroy us but to give us life. He brought us back from hiding. We can now face the truth with hope that one day we will live

⁹⁸ Smith 97.

⁹⁹ Smith 99.

in a perfect state of perfect communication. Christ has opened up an era of communication restoring us back to God's original purposes. Christ is our mediator now. We can go to God through him. Those who have access to God have the same blessing of fellowship with other believers. Our union with Christ puts us in a state of cooperate and mutual sharing of what benefits us all as believers. The family as the smallest unit has been blessed with the same openness that is meant to create oneness. The only challenge we have in our relationships is tension that exists between our sin and the holiness of God. But again we must understand that honesty is expected of us.

Christian couples can now live by faith, loving and forgiving each other just as Christ has forgiven us (Gal. 2:20; Eph. 4:32). Practicing the truth with one another requires faith. "Learning how to be honest with your spouse still requires wisdom and care because as sinners you're quite capable of misusing each other's honesty."¹⁰⁰

2.3 Honesty Expresses our Liberty in Christ

Honest communication is an important expression of how Jesus has freed us from hiding. Ephesians 4:25 starts with "therefore" referring back to certain facts. It points to the work of the Savior. As Christian couples, we move into the path of honesty because of what the Lord Jesus has done for us. We enter into it by putting off what belongs to the old man. We then put on the new man created in Christ Jesus. This is not just for our individual growth, there is cooperative growth involved. If we are one flesh, then my growth affects my spouse. We do help others to grow as they help us to experience the same (Eph. 4:15).

We can do this through sharing information with our spouses. The mere saying that you love someone is not enough to express reality. We are called to be involved in their joys and grief, struggles and victories. Liberty entails enjoying what you have been offered. "Emotions communicate the value you place on something the same way a price tag does."¹⁰¹ Failure to share information with your spouse is a denial for someone to feel loved. The more we hide

¹⁰⁰ Smith 103.

¹⁰¹ Smith 111.

right information from our spouse, expect nothing in return and that kind of relationship does not foster oneness. Let us now look at anger as one of those emotions that threaten honesty. We will also study the biblical instructions on anger.

3. Be Angry but in your Anger Do not Sin

Ephesian 4: 26, “Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger. You must recognize that anger is a normal part of relationship in society. We all get angry at each other or at events. In this verse, we find an allowance to be angry during certain situations. The Apostle is telling us to not sin in that particular state of being angry. Couples should not allow anger to lead them into sin. We are cautioned to not allow anger be an occasion to hurt our friend. The moment it runs out of control, anger can be deadly. Anger becomes sinful if it seeks to bringing harm to another. Paul is warning us to keep our anger under control. Failure to do so will lead in hurting each other.

Anger makes honesty difficult. The moment anger and fear meet they normally foster temptation to hide rather than reveal ourselves to our spouses. If anger is not handled in a godly way, it will direct us to reveal my spouse’s mistakes, faults and dirty laundry because of my being irritated by her. What it does is to foster a counter attack on your own flesh and bones.

Righteous anger, nevertheless, should not be an enemy of honesty. It should be used to generate constructive honesty that protects and restores relationships. Exhibiting righteous anger means that one must be angry at sin whenever you find it in your life first and foremost and then in others. “God’s anger is motivated by his holiness, yes, but also by his love.”¹⁰²

Proverbs 18:19, “A brother offended is more unyielding than a strong city, and quarreling is like the bars of a castle.” We solve problems in love. Each one of us has ever been wounded. We have to watch out for what we do or say during such moments. It is during such times that we attack our spouses rather than focusing our energies on resolving the problem. We begin to make issues personal. Many have made statements during such moments and have regretted for

¹⁰² Smith 113.

life. Let us take warning and “caution against gross exaggeration. Try to remember to remove the words “always’ and “never” from your fights. They have no place because those sweeping universal rebukes are not true. No one “always” or “never” does something. There is an exception somewhere.”¹⁰³ If we fail to communicate rightly, we may end up generating more friction. Trait names like “you are a liar ““you are such a jerk” “you are monster,” and the like can make communication worse. Such use of trait names can damage relationships. “One of the biggest challenges to honesty is shame, our sense that there are things about us that make us unacceptable and unlovable things that we feel we must hide.”¹⁰⁴

Timing. One of the results of knowing and understanding your spouse is developing a sense of timing. Not only word choice, speaking the truth in love includes knowing when to speak. Proverbs 15:23, “A man finds joy in giving an apt reply-and how good a timely word is.” Know the right time. Know the time to give advice, talk and time to listen to your spouse. Arguments are normal in homes but they must be resolved at the right time. We are saying a good time. Paul is saying and commanding not even suggesting, there is time to deal with it. There is no point in postponing it for the next day. The two must know the right time to talk about the issue that is creating division. Both parties must be involved in the talking. The two should not prolong their disagreement. Refusing to deal with it makes it worse. Be honest to each other about the timing so that you may not end up blowing because one of you was not ready to meet. Set the time and do your best to fulfill your commitment to talk. Charles Swindoll suggests that couples ought to know the “battle flags.”¹⁰⁵ Each one of you must be knowledgeable of your spouse’s reactions when she/he is angry. That is why it is necessary to plan your meeting as a couple.

Be ready to put off any issues that cause the divisions in the home and put on what builds up. That is why Paul follows this admonition in Ephesian 4:29 with a command to not “let any corrupting talk come out of one’s mouths but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear.” We already saw how words can be deadly poison. Couples are admonished to work on building each other through good communication.

¹⁰³ Swindoll, Charles R. *Strike the Original Match* (Portland Oregon: Multnomah P., 1977) 106.

¹⁰⁴ Smith 124.

¹⁰⁵ Swindoll 107.

There must be respect for each other if at all what I am saying is to happen. We are dealing with honesty and mutual respect that cultivates an atmosphere to building each other.

We should not hurt each other though we do and have done much harm. We need to develop approaches that are respectful for each other if at all we are to lay the ground level for discussion.

Do not deal with your unresolved anger in the public. Ephesians 4:31, "Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice." "When you swing in public, your malice is showing. There are at least two ways that can do this in marriage. First of all, you can do it with open, bold embarrassment. Second, you can do it with subtle, cutting sarcasm. Either one hurts deeply."¹⁰⁶ It is advisable and proper to deal with our dirty laundry in private. We can bring a lot of embarrassment on ourselves by voicing our dirty issues in public. Spouses should never use sarcastic statements about their mates in public. It is ungodly to slam your spouse in public. The listeners may find it funny but your immediate partner will take it personally and, oh, it hurts.

Lastly, Paul calls for forgiveness. There must come a time where we clean it out and put it off as an issue to be used against your spouse. We image Christ in this whole process. We were forgiven much which makes it a proper and godly for us to forgive. If we have been forgiven much, how can we fail to forgive the little others have done against us.

4. Good Communication Involves Good Listening

It is good to speak but it is also equally important to listen. God requires both activities to be done appropriately. The Bible gives warning "death and life are in the power of the tongue" and that we must give account of "every idle word" we speak (Prov. 18:21; Matt. 12:36). As we noted before that words can be devastating leading to death. Conversely, there are words of life, comfort, blessings and healing. Let us get wisdom from the Book of James 1:19 "know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger."

¹⁰⁶ Swindoll 109.

4.1 “Weighing all the Facts”¹⁰⁷

It is important in communication to take time to listen and weigh the matter. We have a tendency as couples to think that we already know what the other person means or needs before he finishes talking. We also assume right away before asking for clarification. We also assume that the other person will be interested in what I have to communicate. We take pride in thinking that everybody else has to listen to us. The art of listening develops over the years. It is not something that just happens overnight. It is a lifelong process which will change over time. We do not usually hear the same things neither do we face the same situations in life. Good listening respects the one speaking while applying humility and patience on your side. There are a number of factors involved in good listening. The weight of the matter can only be determined through patience and respect. That is why God gave us two ears and one mouth. The interesting fact about these parts is that the mouth closes many times but the two ears are open twenty four hours a day. Proverbs 18:13 calls us “to refrain from drawing conclusions or giving counsel until you have really listened.”¹⁰⁸

Good listening seeks to understand its counterpart. If all marriages were characterized by this form of practice, there would be less conflict that comes from communication. “Respectfully hear what others have to say before you give your opinion on issues.”¹⁰⁹ That is wisdom from Proverbs 18:2 “A fool takes no pleasure in understanding but only in expressing his opinion.” We have that natural tendency of trying to express ourselves. This is even cultivated in us when we go to school. Our teachers have always encouraged us to be self-expressing or else we will never fit in society. The Bible gives us the opposite, we are to esteem others more than ourselves.

¹⁰⁷ Beasley, Bob. *The Wisdom of Proverbs* (San Diego, California: Legacy P., 1984) 297.

¹⁰⁸ Mack, *Your Family God's Way*, 170.

¹⁰⁹ Mack 170.

4.2 Be Slow to Speak

In a certain sense, being slow to speak is a sign of serving others. You want to weigh what you have to say so that it may benefit the listener. This does not mean we are to keep silent all the days of our lives. That would be impossible for humans to keep silent. The issue here is for our protection to avoid the use of many words that are not well calculated. We are to speak that which glorifies and exalts the Lord. The Bible tells us that our conversations should be seasoned with salt (Col.4:6).

We are to speak that which is pure and lovely. We are to bless with our speech and not curse: focusing on the good stuff that brings glory to God. Our mouths must be filled with that which honors Christ. We are to be people that express our gratitude to God rather than always complaining and grumbling. Homes that are filled with thankfulness find it easy to deal with challenges in life. They have learnt the language of heaven which is praise seeing God present in all situations. We must get rid of all malice and bad talk that divides the brethren.

How should we say what we say? Proverbs 15:1-2 a soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger. The tongue of the wise uses knowledge rightly, but the mouth of fools pours forth foolishness. Proverbs 25:11-12 a word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver. Like an earring of gold and an ornament of fine gold is a wise rebuker to an obedient ear. Ephesians 4:15...but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head-Christ...When we speak softly, kindly, wisely, truthfully and with love, we can defuse negative feelings and promote positive relationships. Tips for improving our spoken communication include:

- (a) Speak clearly, avoiding jargon and confusing ramblings.
- (b) Be respectful.
- (c) Use "I" statements ("I feel uncomfortable when...") instead of accusing.
- (d) Apologize when needed.
- (e) Be forgiving.
- (f) Don't rush or cut the other person off.

- (g) Don't talk just to fill the silence.
- (h) Express appreciation and encouragement¹¹⁰

4.3 Time to be Silent

Proverbs 9:7-8, “whoever corrects a scoffer gets himself abuse, and he who reproves a wicked man incurs injury. Do not reprove a scoffer, or he will hate you; reprove a wise man, and he will love you.” There are people who use even honest counsel to become excuses for more nasty words or physical abuse. There are situations where counsel would matter less for one’s spouse. In case your spouse is unwilling to examine himself or herself, ridicules attempts at honest conversation, or resorts to verbal or physical abuse when you try to communicate, repeated attempts at honesty are unwise. For such a scenario “marriage requires delicacy and wisdom- seek counsel from your church leadership – be frugal with words, and if in doubt about what to say, be silent.”¹¹¹

Conclusion

Conflicts are opportunities to resolve marriage issues. They arise due to our sinful tendencies. Communication is one way to resolve them as we apply the biblical principles to each situation couples face. We have established that the best attitude in resolving conflict is developing the art of listening more than speaking. This will allow room to weigh the information and seek address to resolve the matter through the approach flavored by grace.

Summary

We have observed in this lesson that resolving conflicts requires a certain level of maturity for those involved. There must be a commitment to address the issue and creations of a context conducive for effective communication. There are many challenges to peace in marriage that require honesty as the means to promote peace and oneness in the home. Even though the two

¹¹⁰ Bibleanswers.com, Web. 30 Sept. 2015.

¹¹¹ Smith 135.

are sinners, in Christ the two have the opportunity and enablement to practice honesty. The goal is to speak the truth in love with the mind of Christ; that is focusing in serving one's partner for the glory of God.

Lesson Six Questions

1. What is the best way to approach conflicts in marriage?
2. We need more than godly communication in resolving conflict, what is it that we need?
3. Why is the tongue of all parts on the human body a challenge in conflicts? Cite the main passage to this issue.
4. What type of honesty will result in oneness in marriage?
5. God intended the two to live in a state of honesty and oneness from the very beginning. Cite one passage that reflect that divine intended state.
6. Why is it impossible to hide the truth?
7. What is the one mission in the history of Christianity that restores man back into his original state of communication?
8. What happens when anger and fear meet in relations to honesty?
9. Why is it important to be good listeners? Or what is it that one seeks after in being a good listener? Cite some passages from scripture to support you answer.
10. What would you do in cases where a spouse refuses to take counsel or use honest counsel as an occasion for excuses for more nasty words or even physical abuse?

Lesson Seven: Sexual Fulfillment and Intimacy in Marriage

In this lesson we are going to focus on the biblical meaning, purpose and context of Sex in marriage. We will also include some of the misunderstandings of this wonderful divine provision to man.

1. Distortion of Sex

The World has distorted this wonderful provision of sexuality, removing it from its proper place. Many relationships started from a wrong foundation and so they end up abusing sex. Instead of starting relationships the biblical way, many have resorted to having sex outside the marriage covenant. People have turned it to be just a ritual rather than taking time to find out its rightful place and time to engage in it. We are now living in a world where co-habiting is a common practice even in the church where we expect Christians to have a better understanding of the place of sex in a relationship.

Sex before marriage is sin. It is dangerous and poses threat to the future of the two involved in premarital sex. It is true, God can forgive, nevertheless some who have fallen victims of this have had a rough time to make their relationship work. Such a relationship starts at a wrong level. Marriage has three levels, the spiritual, emotional and physical level. Beginning at the physical level creates a distortion in achieving the God intended purpose for the two in marriage. We should not forget that marriage has a spiritual aspect. It is a theological undertaking. That means it should follow biblical instructions if at all the intended goals are to be achieved. Beginning at the physical or pleasure level poses threat to oneness. It makes bonding a hard road to walk.

Physical Unity – Many people start the relationship on the physical level first and then try to build an emotional and spiritual bond. This is common. But when a man leaves his parents to live with his wife, the intent is for the physical relationship to be the result of emotional and spiritual unity that already exists. Just like the emotional part of the

relationship, the physical part of the relationship will not be enough to sustain marriage for the long-haul. There must be something deeper and permanent built in the spirit first.¹¹²

Man is not like the animals of the field. He is made in the image of God. We cannot in any way equate man with beasts.

The world's acceptance of evolution is one reason (among other reasons, my emphasis) for this. If humans descended from animals, and humans are nothing more than animals, then rules and regulations about sexuality are unnecessary. Sex for animals is simply a mating ritual. But God's word plainly state that humans were created in the image of God. This means that human beings are not animals, but God's special creation.¹¹³

Our failure to talk about sex openly is another indirect way it gets distorted in society. This leaves room for silent distortion of sex. "Making the matter worse we are not accustomed to talking about sex-at least without either smirks and giggles or embarrassment and shame. Sex leaves us laughing or crying but not talking."¹¹⁴ Thus we need to get to the Bible and know what God teaches us about sex. Most of the sexual problems that we encounter have come as a result of not knowing the biblical principles and purpose for sex. "Ignorance of the Bible's positive teaching can produce sexual problems in marriage and hinder the genuine experience of oneness."¹¹⁵

¹¹² *My Changed Mind*, Web. 21 Sept. 2015. "The Unity in Biblical Marriage. This article provides more on the other two levels. Spiritual Unity – The first level of unity in marriage must be spiritual. In a Christian marriage, Christ must be the starting point and common ground for all intimacy. He provides the foundation for a relationship between two people who have the capacity to walk in His resurrection life. He provides a definition of forgiveness based on grace. The prerequisite between believers who want to marry must be the potential spouse has the same spiritual relationship in Christ. Emotional Unity – This is where many people who want to marry fail to appreciate the need for spiritual unity first. Christ provides a definition of love that extends beyond feeling. He demonstrates it is a continual and lasting choice in spite of the performance of the other person in the relationship. When love is defined as a feeling rather than something much deeper and eternal the relationship becomes disposable and temporary. Emotions will fade in and out with the ups and downs of life. There must be something stronger to stabilize these fluctuations.

¹¹³ Debinski 53.

¹¹⁴ Smith 219.

¹¹⁵ Mack. *Strengthening Your Marriage* 132.

2. “Theology of Sex”¹¹⁶

We need to ask what sex is. We have to come to the foundation of this wonderful divine provision in marriage. Sexual intimacy is very important and necessary for a health marriage relationship. Therefore understanding it will help us get a better view of its importance. People have different views about sexuality. The question is whether their definition of sexual intimacy is biblical or not. In most of the ancient African cultures, though still practiced in some, it was inappropriate to publically speak about sex. When I was growing up, children were punished for speaking about sex. Even mentioning the word itself was considered “bad language.” The older people used different words in place of it if they wanted to talk about it. They disguised it as a way of keeping it secret from the children.

Some people consider sex to be a dirty practice while others think that sex is just for conception purposes. The latter leads to condemnation of any person who uses family planning methods. These attempts are not biblical.

The Bible places sex and sexual activity within a larger context of holiness and faithfulness. In this regard, the Bible presents an honest and often detailed explanation of God’s design for sex and its place in human life and happiness... The biblical writers affirm the goodness of sexuality as God’s gift. The Song of Solomon is an extended love poem with explicit erotic imagery and language. Sex is affirmed as a source of pleasure and shared intimacy between husband and wife. Sexual pleasure is not an accident of human biology—it is one of the creator’s sweet gifts to human beings. The promise of sexual pleasure and satisfaction is to draw us into the marital covenant, and then shared joy of physical union is a vital part of the marital bond.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁶ Kostenberger 79.

¹¹⁷ Mohler, Albert, *Pure Intimacy* Web. 10 Oct. 2015.

2.1 God Designed Sex for Intimacy

The Bible points to sex as subset of intimacy. This intimacy is meant for the special institution of marriage. The divine imprint is manifested in man imaging after the creator who is relational in his being as reflected in what he does. The Bible teaches us the unity of the godhead found in three persons working harmoniously for the common good of the One. The Apostle Paul points out the profound mystery which refers to Christ and his church (Eph.5:32). If marriage is patterned after Christ's covenantal commitment to his church, then sex as a subset of intimacy should be practiced within God's set boundaries. Sex does not make marriage otherwise people who go from one partner to another would be married to several wives or husbands which is not the case.

God designed it to display his glory which makes it scary calling to reverence the one who gave us this gift. Christ's intimacy with his church gives the standard picture of how the two should live. We learn this from the greatest lover how to live in harmony and sacrificially with a wife that God gives and how a wife is to live in submission but also in safety with the one who holds them now with anticipation to eternally live with our ultimate husband, Jesus Christ.

2.2 "Sex is a Unique Expression of Marriage"¹¹⁸

"Biblically God intended sex between his image bearers to take place within marriage. The "one flesh" relationship of marriage described in Genesis 2 is both a picture of an inner connection-spiritual and psychological intimacy – and physical connection. Marriage and sex were designed to go together."¹¹⁹ Marriage is a picture that reflects Christ's relationship with us in a very special and unique way. "If marriage is unique expression of Christ's love for the church and sex is a unique expression of marital love, then the only logical conclusion is that marital sex is an image of Christ's love for the church."¹²⁰

¹¹⁸ Smith 220.

¹¹⁹ Smith 220.

¹²⁰ Smith 220.

Sex is being practiced physically as an outward expression of marital love has a deeper purpose of constantly reinforcing oneness. If the two fail to see that happen as they grow in marriage, then there must be a problem that needs address. That is why marriage is to be between two believers. Our union with Christ takes precedence over the physical union between husband and wife. The intimacy we have with Christ as husband and wife is key in developing our interpersonal intimacy as a couple. We need to stress that God's Trinitarian relationship as the very essence and definition of love sets the standard for a marriage relationship to be a place of intimacy and love.

3. What is the Purpose of Sex?

Let us start with what the world thinks of sex. They would answer it by saying that "sex exists for man's pleasure and fulfillment. While sex is vital part of human existence, it is a gift of God not to be idolized and the belief that sex, or love, can save a person, while powerful and persistent, is but a myth."¹²¹

The Bible clearly teaches that sex is to be practiced and enjoyed within the context of marriage for the glory of God. That means that the purpose goes beyond any preconceived idea from a human point of view. The ultimate purpose is within the overall plan of God who invented sex. "We must look at sex as an important window into the heart of God. God's plan is for us to pursue and know him in and through the sexual intimacy we have with our spouses."¹²² Sex cannot be extracted out from the overall plan of marriage. It is to be done within marriage for that is the only place where it finds its meaning.

This physical part, our body, is what Christ called His temple. The physical union of our bodies was planned to be a picture of the joy we will have when finally joined with Christ at his return, our spiritual marriage. This is not to say our union with Christ will be sexual, but that our earthly expressions of sexuality in marriage are the closest

¹²¹ Kostenberger 79.

¹²² Allender 214.

approximation to the unity, joy, and pleasurable fulfillment we will experience in heaven.¹²³

Therefore we affirm that sex is a gift from God for the two legally, covenantally married. This is to be practiced between husband and wife, male and female for the glory of God. “Just as the heavens are telling the glory of God’s power and beauty, so sexual climax is telling the glory of immeasurable delights that we will have with Christ in the age to come.”¹²⁴ Let us now focus on the particular purposes of sex within the overall purpose of God.

3.1 Sex in Marriage is for the Propagation of the Human Race

In Genesis 1:27-28, after the creation of the earth, God tells the first couple, male and female “be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it.” Child bearing flows from sexual union although there is an exception for that for those who never have children. The human race continues through procreation. That is why the purpose and overall goal is to subdue the earth.

Adam and Eve responded to the divine command in Genesis 4:1. We begin to see multiplication of the human race. The human race cannot multiply without procreation. This cannot happen between people of the same sex. That is why homosexuality is an affront on the divine command to multiply. It is a direct attack on the family and God’s intentions for it. There is no way people of the same sex can procreate. “Even among animals, the writer of Genesis repeatedly notes that God made each species male and female according to their kind, for the express purpose of procreation (Gen.1:21, 24, and 25). God designed marriage as a means of procreating physical life.”¹²⁵

Africans value procreation for more than other aspects of marriage such as love, companionship and sexual pleasure. Infertility is such a negation of life, the destruction

¹²³ Jackson, Rob “The Sexual - Spiritual union of a Man and Woman, Web. 6 Oct. 2015.

¹²⁴ Piper, John. *This momentary Marriage* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books, 2009)128.

¹²⁵ Kostenberger 36.

of the individual and the community-even the Bible regards death without an offspring as a terrible fate (Ps.109:13).”¹²⁶

Our Western counterpart can decide to not have children of their own. In Africa to remain childless can be stigmatizing and in some culture it is still considered a curse. The blessedness of having children is a biblical fact (Ps. 128:3; Deut. 7:14; Ex. 23:26). That is why it is common though sad to see polygamous relationships in Africa. They do this for several reasons producing children being one of them. The church struggles in counseling barren women in order to prevent them from consulting witchdoctors. It is no surprise to find weak African Christian getting help from witchcraft to get children. Infertility is a major issue in African that requires intentional theological counsel to help the victims. In order for society to continue, procreation must take place. “The survival of society and humanity in general can only be assured by procreation. Child bearing is to be expected in marriage. It is perfectly normal for couples to be concerned if their union does not produce children.”¹²⁷

If male and female were made in God’s image, which is the case, it means God wants us to be like him. We can see this from the task he assigned us. In the same way that God rules over creation he wants us to rule over creation. In the same way that God creates and multiplies life, he wants us to create and multiply life. That is the normal outcome of sexual union in a certain sense. On the other hand, there is no proved formula that having children would make a marriage complete or fulfilling, neither is it true that not having children hinders a godly fulfilling marriage with love and intimacy. That is why it is very important to deal with the biblical answers to the problem of infertility. That would require a separate lesson all together.

Pipers points out another important aspect of childbearing; we are not simply put into this world to make babies. We have a greater purpose beyond just multiplying children. Marriage is for making babies ...who are disciples of Jesus. There is a double meaning in this that I hope will help you remember the point. Marriage is for making children---that is, procreation. Having

¹²⁶ Kunhiyop 195-6.

¹²⁷ Kunhiyop 198.

babies. This is not the main meaning of marriage. But it is important one and a biblical one. But then I add the words *disciples of Jesus*. Marriage is for making children into disciples of Jesus.

His point must be taken with seriously as one way of helping couples who are struggling with infertility or barrenness. They must focus on a higher calling of making disciples of Jesus. God is on the mission of calling people from every tongue, tribe, and nation into a church to make them into true worshipers. Those are the true children of God.

3.2 Sex is for Emotional and Spiritual Unity of Husband and Wife

The word intimacy is made up of at least two critical ingredients: being known and being safe. We experience intimacy when we feel known and understood as well as safe, accepted or cared for by our spouse. Genesis 2:25 says that both Adam and Eve were naked and unashamed. There was openness and transparency in this relationship. They felt comfortable being around each other. There was no emotional distance between the two. Emotions are very dangerous if not spiritually guided. Couples can easily reject one another if they build their sex life on how they feel for each other. Yes it is important to have feelings for your spouse but it is not the foundation upon which one builds sex life.

There must exist a mental relationship in which they express their inner feelings in a physical way that results in a sex encounter. That very joy can be well expressed through sex. Sex for married people is the climax of being one in the flesh. That is why we pointed out earlier that we are not like the animals. We don't just express our physical connect but also our hearts come into play. Sex involves the whole person, body mind and soul without which it may simply be what Smith calls "functional biology...we don't have sex simply because we're animals, driven by biological urges that we can't understand."¹²⁸

Hearts must be connected to achieve the godly sexual intimacy. Short of that will be just a form of duty. The two must aim at giving to their spouse for love is giving. It is intended for mutual pleasure. That is why the two must actively work on their relationship and resolve any

¹²⁸ Smith 221.

pending issues if at all they are to enjoy and glorify God in their sex life. Just having communication breakdown will deter the two from having a fulfilling pleasurable God honoring glorifying sex life. There is so much to say about this subject. I recommend you consult the books in the bibliography at the back of this course on this subject.

3.3 Sex is for Pleasure

In Proverbs 5:15-20, the writer paints a picture of defiling a marriage relationship but end it with a positive word about harmony and pleasure between the two in marriage. In the first few verses he warns his son to stay away from the adulteress lest he falls prey into her wickedness and so gets defiled. He later commands his son to “drink water from his own well” in Proverbs 5:15. And in (verses 18-19) he commands him to “rejoice in the wife of his youth.” “If you ever had the mistaken notion that God was some sort of puritanical prude, this will certainly help dispel that idea! He desires that our marriages provide us with ecstatic sexual delights, exhilarating and pleasurable to the maximum.”¹²⁹

The Bible has one complete book that speaks about this encounter between husband and wife in their marriage. For more study take time to read a book of Song of Songs using a commentary for deeper instruction in this area. In Ecclesiastes 9:9, the writer tells the listener to “enjoy life with your wife.” “This motive for marriage has not been prominent in Africa, but there can be no doubt that when there is love and pleasure, marriage stands better chances of surviving and being a good environment for raising children.”¹³⁰

3.4 Sex Intended to Curb Immorality

The practice of sex in marriage is also intended to restrain sexual immorality that is so common in society. In 1Corinthians 7:1-5, Paul teaches that each man should have his own wife and each

¹²⁹ Swindoll 75.

¹³⁰ Kunhiyop 192.

woman have her own husband. “In Africa a man without a wife is considered incomplete, not a real man. The same applies to a woman without a husband.”¹³¹ Mack says that:

- (a) Sexual pleasure is to be regulated by the key principle that one’s sexuality does not exist for himself or for his own pleasure but for his partner (rights over one’s body are given in marriage to one’s partner).
- (b) Sexual relations are to be regular and continuous. No exact number of times per week is advised, but the principle that both parties are to provide such adequate satisfaction that both “burning” (unfulfilled sexual desire) and the temptation to find satisfaction elsewhere are avoided.
- (c) The principle of mutual satisfaction means that each party is to provide the sexual enjoyment which is due his or her spouse whenever needed. But of course, other biblical principles (e.g., the principle of moderation), and the principle that one never seeks to satisfy himself but his partner in marriage always regulates the frequency in such a way that no one ever makes unreasonable demands upon another.
- (d) Sexual relations are equal and reciprocal. Paul does not give the man rights superior to the rights of the woman. Mutual initiation of intercourse, stimulation, foreplay, and participation in the sexual act is not only permissible but enjoined. Marital rights entail mutual responsibility.¹³²

We can defeat Satan with frequent sex. In 1Corinthians 7:3-5, God has graciously put marriage in place as a weapon we use to overcome fornication. Piper shows us the implications of this passage in relation to Ephesians 6:16 and says:

We should ward off Satan with the shield of faith. Here he says to the married people, Ward off Satan with sufficient sexual intercourse. Don’t abstain too long, but come together soon, so that Satan will gain no foothold. Do we guard ourselves from Satan with the shield of faith or shield of sex? The answer for married people is that faith makes use of sexual intercourse as a means of grace. For the people God leads into

¹³¹ Kunhiyop 191.

¹³² Mack. *Strengthening Your Marriage* 132-3.

marriage, sexual relations are God-ordained means of overcoming temptation to sin (the sin of adultery, the sin of sexual fantasizing, and the sin of pornography). Faith humble accepts such gifts and offers thanks.¹³³

4. The Context of Marital Sexuality

People make jokes about marriage. You can joke about marriage, but be careful that you don't slip across the line and begin to treat it with contempt. In Hebrew 13:4 says, "Let marriage be held in honor among all and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous."

When these words were written - as today - many people weren't holding marriage in honor. Some thought of marriage as too restrictive. They looked for pleasure and intimacy outside of marriage. Others went to the other extreme and dismissed marriage as indulgent. When society dishonors marriage, it's possible for us to begin to dishonor marriage without even realizing it.

The Bible is telling us: Let marriage always be thought of as precious. Let it be treasured like gold and silver and rare jewels. Let it be revered and respected like the noblest, most virtuous person you have ever known. It is to keep the marriage bed pure. That means keeping sexual relationships pure. If there is any area in which we can be guilty of treating the marriage relationship with dishonor, it's in the area of sex. Sex is one of the greatest trouble spots in marriage. We're bombarded with sexual temptation. Sex is one of God's gifts to us, but sin is eager to take this gift and turn it against us.

I love what the writer to the Hebrews says here. One of the ways that we can go against the cultural grain, and one of the ways we can hold marriage in honor, is to pursue sexual purity. He gives us both the positive and the negative side of this. *First*, the positive: "Let the marriage bed be undefiled." He's saying here that the integrity of the sexual relationship in marriage must be kept. The implication is that sex within marriage is acceptable to God. It's a good thing. It's a call to receive one of God's greatest gifts to us. All through Scripture you see a call to delight in

¹³³ Piper 133.

sexual pleasure within marriage. It is a gift. It's the best and most satisfying way to enjoy the sexual relationship. "Let the marriage bed be undefiled."

Second, there's a negative part to this command as well. There are a couple of things we need to avoid in verse 4: sexual immorality and adultery. (*PORNOS* = Pornography) The first is a more general term for those sexual acts outside of marriage, while adultery is used of those who are unfaithful to their marriage. Together the two terms cover all who engage in illicit sexual behavior. Taken together, you have things that destroy sexual intimacy in marriage.

So honor marriage. If you're married, keep the sexual relationship pure. "... for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous." This is sobering. We may get away with something here and now. Not everyone gets caught. But God holds you accountable.

Conclusion

Sexual intimacy is to be practiced in the context of marriage. It is sin when done outside marriage. The church is to teach people to get back to the God intended goals for sex if we are to see society recover from the chaos that prevails in the present situations. The church is to take a lead in honoring marriages and promoting that in the whole of society if at all we are to recover and reinstate the family back in its God intended place.

Summary

We have learnt that sexual intimacy is theologically founded. God commanded and invented it for the purposes of, pleasure, propagation of the human race, for emotional and spiritual unity of the couple and to curb immorality. Sexual intimacy finds its place in a larger context of holiness and faithfulness; it is thus for the glory of God. Having that in mind, everyone must and is commanded to respect marriage. Marriage is honorable despite the fact that man has distorted it. Since marriage is a gift from God, society must be reminded to honor it if at all the beneficiaries are to enjoy it for the honor of Christ.

Lesson Seven Questions

1. What are the three levels of marriage studied in this lesson?
2. What is the main cause of most of the sexual problems in society?
3. What are the implications of marriage as a pattern after Christ's covenantal commitment to his church?
4. What happens or intended when the two in a marriage covenant practice physical sex?
5. What is the overarching goal or purpose of sex?
6. Explain the purpose of sex in marriage implied in Genesis 1:27-28.
7. How does man, male and female image in as an outcome of sexual union?
8. What other purpose do we learn from Genesis 2:25?
9. Explain the last two purposes of sex studied in this lesson and cite some passages to support your answer.
10. Briefly outline the key lessons we learn from Heb.13:4 regarding the context of marriage.

Lesson Eight: Money Issues and Faithful Parenting

This lesson is divided into two parts: The first part will focus on challenges and general principles about money and the second part will be a brief study on faithful parenting and the challenges of raising children in the modern day context.

1. Part One: Money Issues

1.1 Money Challenges

Misunderstandings and troubles it raises in marriage. Unfortunately, finances have become one of the top causes of marriage problems. Many marriages have been broken because of misunderstandings that arise from finances. “It is not a coincidence that most counselors today would put money and sexual relations near the top of their lists of trouble spots in marriage.”¹³⁴ Financial health is very key to the stability of families. You will not be surprised that the Bible teaches more about money and wealth than any other topic. Jesus alone spoke about money in a very extensive way. It is estimated that 15% of his words were about money.

Jesus treated it with great significance because it has much to do with our relationship with God. That means that managing money is a theological issue. In his article “Money Management for Christian Family,” Walter says “You can tell more about the spiritual lives of a couple by looking at their check book than by anything else.”¹³⁵ “When we are converted, we are not converted to Christ alone. It was Martin Luther’ who first spoke of the three conversions: conversion of the heart, conversion of the mind, and conversion of the purse (money).”¹³⁶ The best way couples can manage their resources is following God’s instructions on wealth.

¹³⁴ Piper 129.

¹³⁵ Moddie, Walter. *Money Management for Christian Family*, Web. 15 Oct. 2015.

¹³⁶ The three conversions, Web. 15 Oct. 2015.

2. General Principles about Money

- (a) God is sovereign over money (Deut. 8:17-18), God commands wealth.
- (b) The love of money is the beginning of evil (1Tim.6:6-10; 2 Kings 5:20-27). Through evil cravings for money, many couples have wandered off from the faith. God gives you the resources for his kingdom work. Couples must view their God given riches as an occasion for service. In 1Timothy 6:17-19, we are told to be rich in good works with our finances. The apostle calls us to generosity. We are called to share with the needy, investing in ministry. In Mathew 6:19-21, we are taught that where “a man’s treasure is, so will be his heart.”

In Hebrews 13:5 he says, “Keep your life free from the love of money, and be content with what you have.” The love of money is a desire that displeases God; it is sin. Now the antidote to this sinful love and all the evils that flow from it is contentment. “Be content with what you have.” But the write doesn’t leave us there by ourselves to somehow crank up contentment, he goes on to give a basis for contentment: For he [God] has said, I will never leave you nor forsake you.” The basis for contentment is the promise of God’s unfailing help and fellowship.¹³⁷

- (c) Riches are temporal, never put your trust in them. Couples should not allow money to create divisions in their relationship (Ps.49:17; Prov. 27:24).
- (d) Money cannot buy one’s salvation. We have a very costly gift, purchased by the blood of Christ. Couples must focus on the important wealth, a gift that cannot be paid for by human achievement. Money will never save one from death. Our trust shouldn’t be in riches but in eternal riches. Focus on God who has saved both you and your spouse (Ps.49:6-11).

¹³⁷ Piper 130.

- (e) Enjoy the riches that God provides, it is your lot, accept it and take use of it for his glory. Every perfect gift comes from God. If we use it honorably, we are glorifying God in that respect (Eccl. 5:19).
- (f) Money will never save a person from the wrath of God (Ezek. 7:19). If the two of you focus on money and idolize it, it never gets you fulfilled.
- (g) Contentment in life cannot be found in riches or in how much one owns/has (Luke 12:13-21). There are so many couples with much wealth, but they live in broken family relationships. They find no joy in what they own. Your hope and trust must be in the Lord. He has the power to cut you off from these riches. The fact is when you die, you take nothing with you.
- (h) Never allow money control one's life or family (Matt. 6:24).

3. Work

Work is the source of resources (for an in depth study see Lesson Seven in my course on (Developing a Christian Worldview for Africa). Families are called to work. In Proverbs 6:19-21 the writer challenges the lazy person to consider one of the smallest creatures; how these ants work to save for the future eventualities. Families must know the seasons and have a heart to save and invest. Many present day African families are wasteful in comparison to the old Africa. This manifests itself in the way we waste food. It is understandable that most families have no means to preserve the food for future use. Nevertheless our great grandparents were able to do so and were not afraid of the future. They can improve those old methods and save as their ancestors did. It is a mindset issue that needs change. There are certain principles families must learn from work. We can draw some of the principles from 2 Thessalonians 3:7-12 and Romans 13:1-7.

- (a) There is no bread of idleness.
- (b) Do not feed the idle/lazy.

- (c) Work to earn your bread.
- (d) Idleness leads into busy bodies. The Bible condemns idleness. We are to set an example to the children by being busy with our work.
- (e) We must take the lead as Christian families to pay our taxes to government. We set the example through submitting to authorities.

4. Giving and Spending

The Bible calls us to give. On the other hand we must be careful to balance between generosity and stewardship. If we don't have anything, it will be almost impossible to be generous and give. Couples must be open by leaving their lines of communication open and agree on how to use their resources. Here are some principles from God's word.

- (a) Family Tithing: giving back to God a tenth of your income or proceeds from your work as provided for in Scripture (Mal. 3:10).¹³⁸ The New Testament lays a greater responsibility on our giving. It is grace giving (2Cor. 8:1-7). Paul ends this section with the following admonition, "see that you excel in this act of grace also. "Couples must have this idea that our first financial priority should be giving towards the work of ministry. There is nothing as good as giving towards the ministry when it comes to the area of finances in a home. We should not give any excuses when it comes to this command. One will never have enough in life until he/she learns that whatever he has belong to God. Grace freely given to us motivates us to give cheerfully toward the work of ministry. God owns it all, our giving is returning part of what he owns into his treasury. Moddie challenges families:

¹³⁸ Quoted from Sermons on Stewardship Emma preached in Zana in 2010. Church Giving in the New Testament is a matter of sacrifice (2Cor.8:2, 3). Out of severe trials, with overflowing joy, extreme poverty and rich in generosity make no sense to us today. How do these fit together? There are three levels of giving here: Less than our ability, according to our ability, and beyond our ability → it means pushing beyond where the figures do add up. It means giving the best, usually we want to give away what we do not want or no longer need to use. 2Sam. 24:24" David said "I will not sacrifice to the Lord my God burnt offerings that cost me nothing" We hate taking a risk in giving. A disciple does not ask "how much can I keep? 'But, How much more can I give? Whenever we get comfortable with our level of giving, it's time to raise it again. So we must also learn to give excellently with cheerfulness.

But I would like to challenge you to ask people you trust whether or not they tithe. If they do tithe, ask them about their experience. In all my discussions with people about money I have never heard anyone say that their financial problems started or got worse once they started to tithe. On the contrary, people who tithe seem to be better off than those who don't. It is one of the many mysteries of how God works.”¹³⁹

The matter of giving to God is a matter of understanding the nature of money and all material things. A mature Christian realizes that everything (as in the first principle above) he or she has belongs to God, not just 10 percent of his or her money. It is not a matter of, “this much belongs to God and this much belongs to me.” It all belongs to God. Long ago King David recognized this truth in one of his prayers. David said, “O Lord our God, as for all this abundance that I have... it comes from your hand, and all of it belongs to you (1Chron. 29:16).¹⁴⁰

Give cheerfully and not reluctantly (2 Cor.9:6-7). Our giving as marriage people should be out of grace. Some have called it “grace giving” rather than giving out of duty.

(b) The book of Proverbs 19:17; 21:23 tells us to help the poor.

(c) Place people's needs ahead of profits (Prov. 11:26).

(d) Have a proper attitude in giving. In Mathew 12:41-44 Jesus teaches us the proper attitude through a widow who gave all she had to the Lord. The point is that she knew the giver to be more important than what she possessed.

(e) Try your best to avoid continuous debts. Proverbs 22:7, the rich rule over the poor and the borrower is a slave to the lender.

¹³⁹ Moddie. *Money Management for Christian Families*, n.pag.

¹⁴⁰ O' Donovan, Wilbur. *Biblical Christianity in Modern Africa* (Katunayake, Sri Lanka: New Life Literature, 2006) 122.

(f) Resist impulsive buying. Don't get into unnecessary purchases. Try to spend below your income. It makes sense and brings contentment to the family. I know that budgeting might be difficult for some families. Some have a misconception about budgeting to be a Western practice. That is incorrect, Africa have also budgeted. "The fear of saving money has kept many Ugandans under abject poverty. Statistics from the Ministry of Finance show that the average saving rate of Ugandans stands at 6.2 per cent- far below the minimum savings required for a family to eradicate poverty. While people want to borrow money, they still have a culture of fearing to save."¹⁴¹

(g) Do your best to discuss money issues with your spouse. It is the one flesh principle. If money issues are listed as the leading cause of marriage relationships, you do well to talk as a couple to avoid unnecessary suspicions and bad planning.

"Money can lead to spiritual struggles. Three times in God's word Jesus says "it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for the rich man to enter the kingdom of God (Matt.19:24; Mark 10:25; Luke 18:25). This shows that money can be a very big issue to many of us."¹⁴²

"Any self-centered attitude will lead to countless problems and probably ruin in the long-run. A God-centered and other oriented attitude instead, will promote wellbeing and be a blessing to all."¹⁴³

5. Part Two: Faithful Parenting

God has given parents a great opportunity to raise the children on his behalf. The children stand in a special position as reflected in the word. They are a heritage from the Lord equally together with their parents as bearers of God's image (Gen 1:27; Psa.127:3). From the very beginning of time God instructed the parents to teach the children. The Jews were charged to teach the

¹⁴¹ Okia, Kedi. Uganda Daily Monitor, Feb, 9th, 2011.

¹⁴² Debinski 101.

¹⁴³ Eyrich 131.

children the commands and precepts of God (Deut. 6:6-9). Scripture speaks in several places about the importance of parenting.

The Pentateuch, the Old Testament historical books, and the book of Psalms are pervaded by the consciousness that parents (especially fathers) must pass on their religious heritage to their children. God's express will for his people Israel is still his will for God's people in the church today. Christian parents have the mandate and serious obligation to instill their religious heritage in their children. This heritage centers on the personal experience of God's deliverance from sin and his revelation in the Lord Jesus Christ and his death for us on the cross. Christian parents ought to take every opportunity to speak about these all-important matters to their children and to express and impart to their children personal gratitude for what God has done to their children.¹⁴⁴

5.1 Modern Times Challenges

Parenting is challenging undertaking in modern times. There are so many factors that are contributing to this challenge. The Africa we live in today is different from the one in the twentieth century. There are new lifestyle, technological bombardments, the influence of western thought and living styles. Children used to be raised by the community during the sixties. Discipline was a collective responsibility and exercised on a child by the whole village. The days have changed, you can be sued for disciplining your neighbor's kid. Balancing work and home is becoming difficult because we have working mothers in this generation. We have left the children to the house helpers. Spanking was a normal method of exercising discipline; it is now outlawed, the child can sue the parent or the teachers for spanking a child. Submission was an everyday practice in the home, now it has vanished. In 2 Timothy 3:1-6 the home was the training ground for individuals who served in the broader society. Kostenberger calls it "household code."¹⁴⁵

¹⁴⁴ Kostenberger 93-4.

¹⁴⁵ Kostenberger 104.

Unlike the modern households, ancient households included not only a married couple and children but also other dependents, such as slaves, with the head of the household in a position of authority to which the wife, children, and slaves were to submit. The New Testament features several adaptations of the Greco-Roman “household code” (esp. Eph. 5:21-6:9; Col. 3:18-4:1), a literary device or kind of list that addresses the various members of the household as to their duties, usually progressing from the lesser to the greater. The underlying assumption of this code is that order in the household will promote order on a larger societal scale as well.¹⁴⁶

The church is also getting taken up into change forgetting the biblical teaching on parenting. It is very tragic for the family because we may end up losing the next generation of families to the secular styles and practices. God has given us the principles upon which to build families. The principles to raise children for his own glory.

5.2 It Starts with the Parents

Your children need to see that both of you are in love. Children find it natural, comforting and reassuring when they see that there is harmony and genuine love between their parents. Boys do learn how to treat a woman with respect. The girl child also learns from her mother how to submit and love her husband. They learn more from the parents. This is the best way to teach our children. Parents are expected to have a huge influence on their children as they grow.

Parents need to have faith if they are to raise children in a godly way. “Without it (faith) the blessing (Gen. 18:19) is lost and the purpose of God is made void.”¹⁴⁷ It is through godly upbringing by the parents, will lead children into blessedness. God established his covenant through parents to give them assurance and hope but also to point them to their responsibilities too. God blesses but he calls on parents to be fruitful too. The blessings don’t simply come, but are conditioned on parental faithfulness to live as obedient people. When the children have a

¹⁴⁶ Kostenberger 104.

¹⁴⁷ Murray, Andrew. *Raising Children for Christ* (New Kensington, PA: Whitaker House. 1984) 37.

growing relationship with their Christian parents, it will follow up as they also look to Christ for deeper meaning and growth in their lives.

We have the guarantee that God will provide the grace enough for us as parents to live for him and as a result to instill the precepts of God in our children. Grace for parents as well as for the children.

Parents must see farther than the present. The child will grow. It is by faith that Moses' parents saw he was going to be a godly child. The natural love of a parent's heart made the child beautiful in his mother's eyes, but faith saw more than nature could. God opened their eyes, and they recognized something special, a spiritual beauty that made their child especially precious. "The eyes of faith see in each little one a divine goodness."¹⁴⁸

We are to raise the children while targeting their hearts. Your ultimate purpose is to raise them into followers of Christ.

5.3 Worship

Worship starts with the parents. Parents have an obligation to raise the children in the Lord. It is making them into kingdom citizens, followers of the Lord Jesus Christ. We already noted this in Lesson Seven. God has divinely instituted the family to be an agent for transmitting salvation. That might sound strange but the Old Testament priest was responsible for the giving of sacrifices for the people of God. Christ has become our overall priest and so we lead our children into worship. We do so in prayer, Bible study, encouraging them to serve in the church and counsel them biblically.

We have that privilege of having that natural relationship with our children. They come from us, we share the same DNA that makes it easier for us to draw them to the things of God. When there is parental love, there is an automatic parental influence. It is easier to breathe our life, spirit into our children, than it is for another person doing it. God can use the parental

¹⁴⁸ Murray 49.

influence as he has done in the past and still do today to draw the child to himself. In 2 Timothy we see two generations that had eternal influences on Timothy; it was his grandmother and mother, Lois and Eunice respectively (2 Tim.1:5).

There is a need to devote our children to God's service. We don't simply pray for their salvation. They need to see us living out our salvation each day. They learn obedience from us (Col. 3:20; Eph. 6:1; Ex.20:12).

They learn trusting God from their parents. Yes the commandment "honor your father and your mother" is given to the children but it finds its foundation in the parents. "A wise ruler makes good subjects and a firm commander forms faithful soldiers."¹⁴⁹ And so the children's fulfilment of this precept depends on the parental character.

"Obey your parents in the Lord." God gave us obedience as a means to enjoying him. Children must be trained to honor their parents. This training is a means for forming habits in the children. These habits will come out as they grow either for the general good or for the dishonor of God and society as a whole.

To train a child into godliness can happen when the parents resolve to live in God's presence. When they walk a life worth their calling. The parent is more like the king in a kingdom. Subjects live happily when they abide by the principles of the kingdom. Yes, honor comes from God; when I honor God in the presence of my children, they too begin to honor him and the parents. They begin to observe a spiritual formation in you that leads them to live for him too.

6. More Instructions

This is a large subject which would require far more space and so we will limit ourselves to the following brief statements for raising children. The following instruction is drawn from Proverbs 22:6 "Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it."

¹⁴⁹ Murray 80.

While this shouldn't be considered a divine promise, it is the product of keen and solid observation of what usually occurs in life, and this should be taken seriously. In the end, however, children do make their own decisions as to which way they want to go. Most likely, once grown, children will tend to follow in the path they were shown when still a child. This is why parental discipline and instruction are so important and why obedience and respect for authority must be infused in a child during his or her formative years.¹⁵⁰

Training in word and deed. Training can be formal and informal. Children pick up traits in life from their parents. We have a golden opportunity to instill values in our children at an early age. God has designed it that through our covenantal relationships.

- (a) Teach them the word and doctrine. Teach them to choose the right path.
- (b) Have patience with your children. Our world sadly goes much faster than theirs. Colossians 3:21 says "Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged."
- (c) Always build confidence in your child in whatever you do! Listen to them, don't just hear what they are saying. They need your attention. The more we open up our ears to them, expect them to share candidly with you whatever bothers them or excites them. They learn from parents that they are important. They will know that they have value and that you value them as important people in your life. Dignity is developed over a period. Children grow as dignified individuals because of the parents who treat them so. Pray for their needs with them. This is such an important way in which to show them how much you value them, and will also teach them to pray for others.
- (d) Fathers should do their best to see that mothers stay or work from home unless if circumstances don't allow. I know it is a sacrifice for many women who have already established themselves in a career or families who have great financial difficulty on one

¹⁵⁰ Kostenberger 94.

income. I have dealt with this issue in my course on. Pray to God to make a way if this is a difficult situation for you. God will provide, if you believe He will! There is no greater duty on this earth than raising your children. Failure to do this, expect to lose a complete generation to the world. There is nothing that can be compared to children raised by mothers twenty four hours, seven days a week.

- (e) Teach them to be responsible people from an early age. Allow them to be in charge of particular chores in the home. It is normal for children to help their parents. A toddler wants to get into the business of cleaning dishes even though he is just making them dirty. Just get them involved. It is that very training that begins a lifelong engagement in that particular activity. One activity done well sets the principles he will use for another. When you train them, you are preparing them to be dependable citizens. You are showing them that they can do without you and do that very thing well.
- (f) Fathers do not abdicate your responsibility of being in charge over the home! Your children must come to know who is in control. You are not simply doing it for yourself but preparing another generation of parents.
- (g) Love your children unceasingly! Hug them as much as possible. Praise them always! Nothing delights a child more than praise from his parents. Let them know just how much you love them! This builds confidence in them. They will always aim at excellence.
- (h) Spend time enjoying your children. Begin to know what they like and dislike. Get into their world. Check on the music they listen to as an example. I know they get into many activities. You will get to know many of their friends through this. The purpose is to see where they are doing well and where they need help for direction. You want to apply 2 Timothy 3:16; to teach, to reprove, to correct and train them into all righteousness.
- (i) Discipline your children when needed! We believe the bible to say that children must be lovingly guided with patience, humility, compassion, kindness and taught right from wrong as early as possible. Parents who do not consistently and fairly deal with the

"wrongs" in a child's life will most likely face many years of misery! Proverbs 13:24 He who spares the rod hates his son, But he who loves him is careful to discipline him.

Conclusion

Husbands and wives must get back to biblical principles of money and parenting if at all we are to see progress and growth in homes. They must know the place for money in marriage or else there will be perpetual friction in the home since finances are number one cause of misunderstanding in the home. The same truth applies to faithful parenting, man-made methods to raise children will only produce humanists other than God's children or disciples.

Summary

We have briefly studied the challenges money or finances bring. We have also studied the challenges faced in faithful parenting. We have tried to provide the solutions to these challenges and that they can be resolved if only the affected parties are willing to get back to the biblical principles. The foundational truth is to view money and children as blessings from God. He commands them to come therefore he determines how to treat them. Raising children faithfully is partially dependent upon parents living their lives for the glory of God in society and primarily before their children. Money should also be treated with the same attitude as belonging to God. We are stewards for that matter.

Lesson Eight Questions

1. What warning do we get from 1 Timothy 6:6-10?
2. How should couples view money and wealth from a biblical perspective? Cite some biblical basis.
3. Is it right to deny oneself from enjoying the proceeds from your labor? Explain your answer with scripture.
4. What key passages would you point to someone struggling with laziness?
5. What should be our financial priority and attitude in giving as families? Provide biblical support for your answer.

6. What makes the children equal in importance to their parents? Provide biblical support.
7. State some of the challenges parents face in raising children in modern day Africa?
8. How do parents instill lasting influence on their children (boys and girls)?
9. Why is crucial for parents to live a life of total devotion to God and his service in the midst of their children? Cite some passages and one New Testament example of faithful family teaching and living.
10. Why Proverbs 22:6 not considered a promise according to Kostenberger?

Annotated Bibliography

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---. *Solving Marriage Problems*. Grand Rapids, MI, Zondervan Pub., House, 1983. Adams has written over 100 books and this is one of those. I highly respect Adams for his Biblical convictions on every subject he explores in his books. This is one of those resources for Christian counselors that offers guidelines to help solve marriage problems biblically. In this book he sets out by laying down the Biblical foundations of marriage as a precedence before offering solutions to marriage problems. It is always important to know the object and how it works before you attempt to repair it in case it is damaged. Such wisdom is expressed in this book.

Allender, Dan B. and Longman, Tremper. *Intimate Allies*. Wheaton, Illinois: Tyndale House Pub., 1995. One can say that this book is a combination of doctrine and practice. It is written by a counselor and theologian. It is very rich in instruction about marriage but also with practical cases in families. We are talking of a 360 plus pages volume on marriage. I recommend it as a reference not a text book.

Beasley, Bob. *The Wisdom of Proverbs*. San Diego, California: Legacy P., 1984. This is one of those books on my office library shelf. It is devotional but with in-depth interpretation of Proverbs. I recommend to families and Christian workers to use it and attain knowledge that is not only for them but also as a preparation for them to provide instant help to people struggling to find answers to life questions and needs.

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This manual is one of those that I first used when doing my course on marriage in seminary. Howard as a Christian counselor designed it to provide a basic training manual for Christian workers in the subject of marriage and family counseling. He opens his teaching by spending two lessons on the theology of marriage. Then he moves into aspects of change and their necessity. He makes one of the fundamental point that marriage counseling begins at home. Your very home. It is not in an office but the home. That is where we need to primarily deal with marriage issues. He uses case studies and well-designed homework exercises for his audience to reinforce the content provided in his instruction.

Fernandez, Steve. *The Basics of A Christ-Centered Marriage*. Vallejo: Exalting Christ Pub., 2001. I have used this manual for almost every premarital counseling session I have conducted during the last fourteen years. It is simple, biblical and with counselees' work exercises at the end of every lesson.

Fitzpatrick, Elyse. *Helper by Design*. Chicago: Moody Pub., 2003. What can I say about Elyse? She is one of the few women who have written on one of the most contested command for women; the command to submit to their own husbands. This book can be very helpful to women struggling with the command. The good side to it is that it is written by a woman. I used to go to church with Elyse while attending seminary and I can say, she is godly wife, mother and grandmother. She has raised wonderful kids and they are also raising godly grandkids. Women can enjoy their relationship with Christ and their spouses if they take time to listen to Elyse as she unpacks passages from the Bible explaining what it means to be a helper.

Guthrie, Donald. *New Testament Theology*. Downer Grove, Illinois: Inter-varsity P., 1981. Guthrie has provided one of those thematic theological volume to the church. Anyone seeking to know the New Testament themes as they run through the Bible will not be disappointed using this book.

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Harvey, Dave. *When Sinners Say I Do*. Wapwallopen: Shepherd P., 2007. Dave writes in a novel style. He takes the reader into a journey of marriage. This journey undertaken by two sinners has many challenges. He points out real life experiences in his and other marriages that strike at the heart of every serious couple. There are joys and sad times. Nevertheless, he points his audience to the gospel as the source of change for every marriage. I observed that Dave is very open and willing to speak about his family issues to help many that are battling with similar issues. He does all this to show us that change is possible for the glory of Christ.

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Kostenberger, Andreas J., and Jones, David W. *God, Marriage, and Family*: Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2010. This is one of those resources that is packed with so much information hard to grasp in a short time. These men spend over 385 plus pages addressing several issues on marriage. They deal with many issues that are prevalent in our modern age. This is one of those books I recommend for any marriage and family classes. Pastors and Christians leaders involved in the ministry of counseling ought to own a copy.

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Mack, A. Wayne., and Mack, Carol. *Sweethearts for a Life Time*. Phillipsburg, New Jersey, P& R Pub., 2006. This book cuts across all categories of married couples. It touches a number of issues just in this one volume. You have over 40 chapters in just close to 300 pages of material. The intention is to help couples develop an attitude that marriage can get better as the two grow but with obedience to the gospel. I have always asked my students to read it and write what they learn from it..

Murray, Andrew. *Raising Children for Christ*. New Kensington, PA; Whitaker House. 1984. This book is challenging for parents to raise children for Christ. It is a classic. At a glance one may think it is a novel and I assume the author used that approach to attract a certain class of people to read it. The moment you begin to read you realize godly wisdom needed for raising children.

O' Donovan, Wilbur. *Biblical Christianity in Modern Africa*. Katunayake, Sri Lanka: New Life Literature, 2006. Wilbur has offered us a resource that addresses key issues in modern Africa that need not be ignored. His style of writing is simple and lucid. Even though there a few areas that seem controversial for the western audience, on the whole it is worth for study as a warning call to serious African students to watch out for what is threatening our culture.

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Powlison, David & Yenchko, John. *Pre-engagement, 5 Questions to Ask Yourself*. Phillipsburg: P&R Pub., 2000. This small pamphlet is handy for counselors and pastors in doing premarital counseling. I have found it to be beneficial in provoking counselees to rethink deeply about marriage before they come to their wedding day.

Piper, John. *This Momentary Marriage*. Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books, 2009. Piper emphasizes the key to understanding what marriage is all about; it is for God. He put it in place. As it is always with Piper, he points to the ultimate purpose of marriage to not be different from his purposes for creating all things; his glory.

Sande, Ken. *The Peace Maker*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 2004. This volume is probably considered to be top on the list in helping people deal with conflict in a biblical way. Sande draws the principles from the Word from chapter to chapter. The church today wrestles with conflicts; conflicts in the home, work place, schools, church and in many other social relationships. This book does provide practical advice in peacemaking between parties involved in conflict. You hardly hear conflict resolution sermons yet there are conflicts on a daily basis that need be addressed. I recommend this book to every church leader and counselor. There are several resources one can download on his website that I have used personally in our church small groups helping them learn how to be peacemakers.

Strauch, Alexander. *Men and Women Equal Yet Different*. Littleton, Co: Lewis and Roth Pub., 1999. Strauch has contributed greatly to the ongoing gender struggle in the modern age. His instructions are worth listening to if we want to see the church continue to

grow. Failure to believe and accept the biblical instruction on the differences that male and female have plus the points of equality that there are, will make the church ministry a hard undertaking.

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Swindoll writes with experience but with biblical evidence. He focuses more on the expectations that people come with in marriage. Time comes when they die out. What do you do next? Swindoll provides help for couples to “strike the original match” as he calls it. This book has great lessons that help in strengthening marriages.

Tripp, Tedd. *Shepherding a Child's Heart*. Wapwallopen, PA: Shepherd P., 1995. This book is unique by itself. The author takes the heart of the child to be the main issue to address in parenting. The gospel is primarily applied to the heart. Many parents would like to see well behaved children forgetting that playing God is an easy road. Ted reminds the parents to target the heart. Once the heart is changed, the gospel will eventually bring fruitful obedience in the child. That is sustainable lifestyle. He also breaks down different age groups and provides strategies to help parents raise these kids in their age bracket. This is the basic text used by mothers in my home church in Uganda and we have observed tremendous change in the way parents are raising their children.

Trobisch, Walter. *I Married You*. Leicester, England: Inter-varsity P., 1971.

Winston T. Smith, *Marriage Matters*. Canada, New Growth P., 2010. Smith manifests his counseling skills in this book. He divides the book into three sections. First, he calls his audience back to the foundations of marriage and that is God; he shows where couples should draw their strength and guidance. Marriage is all about God. Secondly he deals with what threatens marriage and how to solve such. And lastly he calls the couples to stay on course as married people. It is through dependency on God's sustaining grace, love, and forgiveness as marriages imitate Christ's example how he treats his church.

Biography

Emma was born in a little village of Uganda to Roman Catholic parents and he came to know the Lord while attending high school in 1980 through the ministry of the Presbyterian Church in Uganda. He studied at Reformed Bible College (Kuiper College) in Grand Rapids Michigan and graduated with a (BA Rel. Educ.) class of 1986. He returned to Uganda and planted Presbyterian churches in his country.

In 1994, he returned to the United States for graduate studies and graduated with MATS degree in 1996 at Westminster Seminary in California. He returned to Uganda that same year and was assigned to start Westminster Theological College and Seminary (licensed in June 2014 under the umbrella name “Westminster Christian Institute Uganda”). This college and seminary trains church leaders from Uganda and ten other countries in the reformed faith. He has been the principal of the same institution since 1996. He has been a pastor of Zana Community Presbyterian Church which he planted in 1997. Emma is married to Allen and has two sons. Emma has done much in contributing to the education department of his home denomination (the Presbyterian Church in Uganda) through writing manuals that complement the church’s work of ministry.

INSTRUCTOR'S MANUAL

Lesson One Answers

1. To God who designed; the solution is through the pattern outlined in His word.
2. Biblical marriage founded upon God's Word and lived out according to it. This is from the very beginning of creation. Genesis 2:18-25: 25.
3. One of the signs of the end times is attacking this divine institution of marriage.
4. God started it and has the right to define it. Before any other institution was in place, marriage was, so we leave it to God to tell us how and what and anything concerning marriage.
5. Matthew 19:3-4, from the very beginning, God created them Male (s) and Female(s) and not plural. There is no provision for polygamy. It is one man one woman.
6. Homosexual relationship is condemned as a direct attack on the institution of marriage.
7. Since everything exists for the glory of God, marriage is no exception. So marriage was started by God for him and for his glory.
8. There are blessings for man including companionship, solving the state of loneliness, multiplication of godly seed and sexual fulfillment besides others.
9. Our relationship with God; he intended to make man more like his maker. In the New Testament it is about transforming man into the image of his son Jesus Christ.
10. The curse which came upon marriage due to the fall of Adam and Eve fell into sin can only be lifted by Christ.

Lesson Two Answers

1. To leave means to loosen, relinquish, permit, commit self-forsake and cleaving to cling, to impinge, adhere (as if with glue), abide, fast cleave-fast together, follow close (hard after), be joined (together) to keep together, to be deeply attracted to one another, stick together.
2. There can be no lasting union in godly marriage if the two refuse to leave their parents and cleave to their partners. God knows that this is the best way to develop the one flesh relationship failure to do so results in major challenges in marriage.

3. Cutting loose from your family of origin. It is more than sexual union; it involves making decisions together. It is adopting to new orientations. Solving problems together.
4. ... the closet picture of our union with Christ.
5. The love for our family of origin. Starting new interactions and friendship because we want to remain rigid. There is also the issue of parental over possessiveness and nosing into the young couple's marriage.
6. It is not sinful at all to imitate godly traits from parents but the problem comes when they try to make their parents the standard upon which to build their family.
7. It is because not everything that one grew up watching being done in his family of origin is right. An action must be proved from the very word of God. It is wrong to simply assume an action to be valid because the parents practiced it.
8. It means we must evaluate their strength and weaknesses, and love them anyways because God has given them to us. We must treat them as counselors and advisers and resources to us throughout our lives.
9. He pleads to couples willingly; honestly and respectfully discuss their family background counsel to see if it is provided for in scripture rather than taking sides because the two come from almost two different backgrounds.
10. It means putting off the natural, imitative, or reactionary relationship that we had with our parents and putting a peer relationship with them.

Lesson Three answers

1. Genesis 3:16 "your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you."
2. It is the refusal to willingly be under submission, one decides to control that which must be in charge. So the wife usurps the husband's position as she did in the garden leading to the fall.
3. Conflict, each of the two begin to fight to be in control. The Bible says that unless the two live by the Spirit of God, life in the home will constantly be a conflict (Eph. 5:18-21).
4. Ephesians 5:21-33.
5. He is to be his wife's leader, lover and sanctifier or liberator.
6. Well, like any other roles in marriage, it is constitutional by God's making them male and female, it is not campaigned for, it is rather positional power.

7. Thinking that they are superior, consultant or referent power, dictators sometimes abdicating their positions, or dominating thus abusing their roles, information source, etc...
8. Submitting to her husband and being her husband's helper.
9. In Genesis 3, the woman took the powers into her own hands and made a decision that would affect the whole human race to this day by refusing to seek counsel from her husband and ate from the forbidden fruit.
10. Some think it is an outdated oppressive practice or making a woman inferior or presupposing passive obedience to authoritarian rule making women into slaves. But the Bible sets before us Christ, though equal with God himself submitted to the Father's will as the perfect example to follow.

Lesson Four Answers

1. It is another way of trying to put marriage in the place of God. Asking too much of marriage than what it is for each individual couple.
2. This subject should not be avoided. People need help to think through their expectations as they plan for marriage and even those that are already married. If this is done intentionally, many marriages can be saved or we can prevent many problems that might have risen in marriages.
3. Scripture says that beauty is deceptive and charm is deceitful, and again beauty is vain (Prov. 6:25; 31:30).
4. Marriage cannot have a blessed ground to flourish if the two have no personal relationship with God. The two must be believers for marriage to work out for God's glory.
5. The human heart; our thoughts and belief systems. It is all because we are creatures of need born with a sense of acceptance and relationship.
6. James 4:1-2
7. By struggling to have our needs met because we feel we deserve more than what we have so they control us as we keep demanding thinking that attaining them will result in our happiness.

8. No, the reason being that not all expectations are wrong or sinful. It is not wrong to have good desires. The problem lies in turning them into idols, some form of god.
9. Husbands and wives must change their focus from thinking about what benefits them as individuals and start thinking about their partner's good. It is about seeking that which glorifies God and not me as a person.
10. on the idols of the heart (my unrealistic expectations)

Lesson Five Answers

1. It is intended to bring peace and harmony between the parties involved.
2. Sin had broken down our communication with God but in Christ, dialogue is restored for believers to have communion with God.
3. We are created by a communicating God and has already given us the content of what we have to communicate, this we do as we image his son Jesus Christ. He intended it all to be done for his glory.
4. God has designed communication to be a means of bringing people together. People get bonded through communication. This bonding must take place on two levels "emotionally and physically.
5. Gestures can communicate a message so do facial expression, smiles, yawns, dress and silent communication.
6. Husbands can easily minister to their wives by living a servant leadership lifestyle. The husband's willingness to sacrifice for his wife is evidence for love so powerfully communicated. It is a reflection of Christ's sacrificial love.
7. By asking to understand to help us avoid making wrong judgments. It is easy to make unnecessary assumptions when in the true sense our interpretations are wrong in many cases.
8. God calls us to speak too. He gave us the mouth to communicate and speak what builds up. "Our mouth are to be used to bring cheer, to turn wrath, to establish friendship, to commend knowledge, to sustain the weary, to give encouragement, and to promote healing
9. Over-talk; Proverbs 10:19; 12:23; 20:19; 17:9, 27, 28

10. By being men and women of integrity and honesty; By affirming the truth to your mate; By focusing on building up not destroying your own house; “By not gossiping about your spouse; By readiness to speak the truth to each other even when it hurt;

Lesson Six Answers

1. As opportunities to demonstrate the love and power of Jesus. They are to be taken as opportunities for growth and not be dreaded.
2. We need honest good communication and showing a willingness to resolve conflict.
3. James 3:5-6, 8, it is the same part that speaks grace at the same time curses. It brings forth words for building up or breaking relationships. It is hasty at time, it can even bring poisonous words.
4. It is that honesty that reflects God’s love where by the two share right information in the right way for the purpose of bringing oneness and growth.
5. Genesis 2:25, the two had nothing to hide from each other and from God.
6. Truth is inescapable because of our being made in God’s image. We always come face to face with the truth because we cannot escape knowledge of ourselves and of God’s purity, holiness and wrath. We want to communicate what we are by creation but we fail because of sin, so conflict arise.
7. The coming of the mediator, Christ Jesus gives us access to God to have the blessings of fellowship not only with God but with fellow man. Our union with Christ puts us in a state of cooperate and mutual sharing of what benefits us all as believers. The family as the smallest unit has been blessed with the same openness that is meant to create oneness.
8. Anger can make honesty difficult because when anger and fear meet they normally foster a temptation to hide instead of revealing ourselves to our spouses.
9. It is intended to understand your counterpart , (proverbs 18:2, 13; James 1:19)
10. There comes time to be silent and be frugal with words. It is not wise to continue trying to use words in that scenario. The Bible says in Proverbs 9:7-8 “whoever corrects a scoffer gets himself abused, and he who reproves a wicked man incurs injury. Do no reprove a scoffer, or he will hate you; reprove a wise man, and he will love you.”

Lesson Seven Answers

1. Marriage has three levels, the spiritual, emotional and physical.
2. They come from ignorance of the biblical principles and purpose of sex. It is also the ignorance of the Bible's positive teaching.
3. It implies that sex should be practiced within the boundaries of scripture. God sets the limits and rules by which it is to be done.
4. This outward sexual practice of marital love has a deeper purpose of reinforcing oneness.
5. Sex is intended to be practiced for the glory of God. This cannot be divorced from the overall plan of God who gave it as a gift to human beings only to be done in a covenanted relationship between husband and wife, male and female.
6. Child bearing flows out of sexual union to continue successive generations or the human race (procreation). It is God's way to fill and subdue the earth.
7. It means God wants us to be like him. We can see this from the task he assigned us. In the same way that God rules over creation he wants us to rule over creation. In the same way that God creates and multiplies life, he wants us to create and multiply life.
8. Sex was intended for emotional and spiritual unity. The two must have openness and transparency in their relationship. They must feel comfortable being around each other with no emotional distance between the two.
9. Sex in marriage is for pleasure and to curb sexual immorality; Proverbs 5:15-20; Eccl. 9:9; 1Cor. 7:1-5
10. Marriage should be honored by all those in it and those outside it. Marriage is a very precious and treasured institution. The marriage relationship should/must be kept pure and that the ones in marriage should not look outside that union for pleasure or intimacy.

Lesson Eight Answers

1. We should not have evil cravings for money, for the love of money and riches is the beginning of evil.
2. We must view riches as an occasion for service, we are called to generosity 1Timothy 6:17-19.

3. No, it is not right to. The Bible says we are to enjoy the riches that God provides as long as we don't forget to do so for the glory of God (Eccl. 5:19).
4. Proverbs 6:19-21; 2 Thessalonians 3:7-12.
5. It should be giving towards the work of ministry (Mal. 3:10); and we must give cheerfully and not reluctantly (2Cor. 9:6-7).
6. Children as well as parents are created in the image of God and they are a heritage from the Lord (Gen.1:27; Psa. 127:3).
7. New lifestyles, technological bombardment, mothers are no longer home to raise the children, discipline is no longer collective as it used to be in the traditional African society. We live in evil days where children are disobedient to their parents.
8. It is when they see parents practicing genuine love for each other in the home. Boys learn how to treat a woman right from the dads while girls learn how to submit from their moms.
9. Children learn obedience from us (Col. 3:20; Eph. 6:1; Ex. 20:12). Children learn trusting God from their parents. In 2Timothy 1:5 we get a New Testament example of covenantal line of parents passing on the faithful teaching to Timothy.
10. Yes it shouldn't be treated as a divine promise but it is a product of keen and solid observation of what usually occurs in life and it should be taken seriously because normally children tend to follow the path they were shown when still a child.

Exam

1. What is Biblical marriage? Cite the primary passage that point to this truth.
2. Besides condemning polygamy as sin in Mathew 19:3-4, what other disturbing sexual sin is condemned in this original design of Male and Female relationship?
3. State the overarching ultimate divine purpose for marriage and what it was intended to reflect.
4. Why is leaving and cleaving a difficult command to obey? Give at least three hindrances to this principle.
5. To what extent should young couples depend on their parents in shaping their family?
6. Where do we find the first incidence of conflict in the Bible?
7. What is the proper interpretation of "desire" in Genesis 3:16; 4:7?

8. What is that one classical text in the whole Bible that spells out the roles in marriage?
9. What are some of the misconceptions people have about wife submission to her husband and how would you respond to them from the word by just using one perfect example of submission?
10. Why is physical attractiveness not a valid reason for choosing out a marriage partner? Provide biblical basis support to your answer.
11. Why is it important for the two getting married be born again?
12. How can we avoid idolizing even the good expectations one may have for his marriage?
13. What broke down man's communication with God? How is this communication restored?
14. Communication is not an options in all human relationship. Respond to that statement.
15. How do we resolve the possibility of misunderstanding nonverbal communication
16. What is the best way to approach conflicts in marriage?
17. Why is it important to be good listeners? Or what is it that one seeks after in being a good listener? Cite some passages from scripture to support you answer.
18. What are the three levels of marriage studied in this course?
19. Briefly outline the key lessons we learn from Heb.13:4 regarding the context of marriage.
20. Why is crucial for parents to live a life of total devotion to God and his service in the midst of their children? Cite some passages and one New Testament example of faithful family teaching and living.