

# MARRIAGE

*“For this reason a man will leave his father and mother  
and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.”*

**Gen. 2:24**

- I. The design of God for marriage is to leave one’s parents, to commit to each other and to develop oneness spiritually, emotionally and physically.
  - A. **Leaving:** The husband and wife’s relationship to their parents must be changed from their prior parent-child relationship.
    1. Each must make the husband-wife relationship the top human priority.
    2. The wife must transfer her submission from her parents to her husband’s authority.
    3. The husband is no longer under his parents’ authority, but is directly under God’s authority, established through His Word, His Spirit and the local church.
    4. Both may continue to seek their parents’ advice without being controlled by them.
    5. Both must honor their parents. (Eph. 6:2; Ex. 20:12)
    6. Each should not be sinfully dependent upon his/her parents.
    7. Each must leave the past behind by not being bound to his/her parents by sinful emotions.
      - a. Eliminate hatred, bitterness, anger or suppressed resentment toward his/her parents through forgiving so that the root of bitterness does not negatively impact the marriage. (Mark 11:25)

*“See to it that no one misses the grace of God  
and that no bitter root grows up  
to cause trouble and defile many.”*

**Heb. 12:15**
      - b. Deal with guilt toward parents by
        - 1) confessing sins to God.
        - 2) seeking their forgiveness for transgressions against them. (Matt. 5:23,24; Rom. 12:18)
    8. Each must accept his/her mate rather than trying to change him/her to please the parents. (Rom. 15:7)

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9. Each must not use his/her parents as an avenue of emotional or physical escape from marriage responsibilities.
10. Both must not permit their parents to control or intimidate them or to undermine their marriage relationship.
11. Both must stand together to ward off parental control or intimidation.

B. **Committing:** The husband and wife make a lifetime commitment to one another.

1. Marriage is an **irrevocable covenant** to which husband and wife are sealed for as long as they both live. (Mal. 2:14b)

*“For this reason a man will leave his father and mother  
and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.  
So they are no longer two, but one.  
Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate.”*  
**Mark 10:7-9**

*“As God by creation made two of one,  
so again by marriage He made one of two.”*  
*Puritan Quotations*  
Thomas Adams, a Puritan

2. Marriage is a **permanent commitment**
  - a. in sickness and in health, in prosperity and in adversity, in glad times and in sad times, in agreement and in disagreement.
  - b. in which husband and wife will forsake all others, cleaving to one another today, tomorrow and as long as they both shall live.
  - c. to seek God’s help and solutions for problems in the marriage in times of difficulty.
    - 1) Often *one* spouse, committed to biblical living can change the direction of a marriage.
    - 2) If the disobedient spouse does not change, the obedient partner will be given God’s grace to live victoriously with the difficult mate. (1 Cor. 10:13; Phil. 4:13)
  - d. to **learn** to love according to God’s standards because God commands Christians to love even their enemies. (Luke 6:27-35)

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- 1) God will teach the willing spouse how to love. (1 Thess. 4:9) Review *Biblical Love, CTO*.
  - 2) The husband and wife must realize that the absence of *feelings* of love is not an excuse for lack of perseverance, for lack of commitment or a biblical reason for divorce.
  - 3) God can change a spouse's feelings when he/she chooses to submit to His commands and principles.
- e. in which each realizes that though marriage may have taken place for selfish, ungodly reasons, one's spouse was still ordained by God. (Eph. 1:11)
- 1) The couple may receive God's consequences and discipline for violating His directive will in His commandments. (Gal. 6:7,8; Heb. 12:6-11)
  - 2) They must understand that *nothing* can thwart God's predestined will for their lives. (Job 42:2; Dan. 4:35) See *Who's In Charge? Study 6* for an explanation of how man's responsibility and God's sovereignty work in harmony with one another.
- f. to remain married even if one or both spouses were not Christians when they married because God still ordained their marriage. (Dan. 4:35; Eph. 1:11; 1 Cor. 7:24)
- 1) The believer is to remain married to the unbeliever who chooses to remain in the marriage. (1 Cor. 7:12-14)
  - 2) The believer whose unbelieving spouse leaves of his/her own choice, is no longer bound to the marriage. (1 Cor. 7:15)
3. God regards marriage so highly that He asks that *all* people to honor the sacred institution He has created.

***“Marriage should be honored by all,  
and the marriage bed kept pure,  
for God will judge the adulterer  
and all the sexually immoral.”***

**Heb. 13:4**

- a. No one should try to undermine his/her own marriage, nor anyone else's.
- b. Everyone should encourage the married to remain faithful to their marriage vows.

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4. Divorce is never a command, but may be an option if *biblical grounds* are present.
  - a. Adultery (Matt. 5:32; 19:9)

- b. An unbelieving spouse physically abandons the marriage. (1 Cor. 7:15)

**Note:** In either of these situations, there should be consultation with the elders/pastors before remarriage. Consultation is also advised if a divorce took place before a person become a believer. (Heb. 13:17)

5. Divorce is not recommended, if biblical grounds are present,
  - a. until the Christian spouse has biblically dealt with his/her own sin problems. (Matt. 7:1-5)
  - b. until the godly spouse has sought forgiveness for his/her sins of God and the erring spouse.
  - c. until the believing spouse has explored various avenues to save the marriage.
  - d. until church discipline has been implemented, if the offending party is involved with a church which is committed to discipline. (Matt. 18:15-17)
  - e. until the partner who is desiring a divorce has received the approval of his/her church's authority. (Heb. 13:17)
6. Separation is *not* an option when a couple is having marriage problems
  - a. because God does not recognize separation as a biblical state in Scripture.
  - b. because the believing spouse cannot obey God's commands concerning marriage in a separated state. (Eph. 5:22-33)
  - c. because when one is separated from a spouse, he or she may be more easily
    - 1) influenced to divorce because of the sense of relief from the pressures of a difficult marriage.
    - 2) influenced to commit adultery because of no longer living with a mate.
  - d. because couples face more difficulties in trying to resolve problems in a separated state.

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7. Separation is an option
  - a. when physical abuse of the husband, wife, and/or children is involved, which is a violation of the government's laws.
    - 1) Physical or sexual abuse of children must be reported to the authorities. This is required by law. (Rom. 13:1-3)
    - 2) The husband or wife who is sexually or physically abused should report abusive acts to church and governing authorities for protection. See *Discerning Sexual Practices in The Christian: Called to Sexual Purity* for more information concerning sexual abuse.
      - a) The abusing spouse should be warned that further physical abuse will be dealt with by the governing authorities since he or she is violation of the law. (Rom. 13:1,2)
      - b) The abusing spouse should be put out of the home on a court order if abuse occurs after the warning.
      - c) Reasonable conditions for return may be set up by the offended spouse, including counseling and accountability.
      - d) The believer's goal should be to reconcile the marriage and to end the separation as quickly as possible.
      - e) Physical and sexual abuse of a spouse are not biblical grounds for divorce.
  - b. when adultery has taken place and both parties desire to restore the marriage.
    - 1) The adulterous partner may leave the home for a period of time.
    - 2) The couple should seek scriptural help and accountability from a pastor or someone in spiritual leadership.
    - 3) The adulterous partner should not return home until the spiritual leader, giving oversight, advises him/her to do so.
    - 4) The spouse who committed adultery must realize that it is his or her duty to rebuild the trust that has been violated by his/her sin.
8. Spouses who are physically separated from their marriage partners must never date because they are still married.

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9. God permits no other reasons for divorce such as emotional abuse, the husband not providing financially, etc.
10. The spouse who is the target of emotional abuse should realize that he/she is to
  - a. examine his/her own character and commit to dealing with sin biblically. He/she should be particularly aware of not excusing *sinful responses* to sins perpetrated by the offending spouse. (1 Pet. 4:12-16)
  - b. admonish the offending spouse in a respectful, loving manner. See *Admonishing, CTO* for specific instructions.
  - c. commit to learning to love the spouse, who you may consider an enemy, since God commands you to love your enemy! (Luke 6:27-38) Review *Biblical Love, CTO*.
  - d. realize that God teaches that a godly person will be persecuted for faith in Christ. (Matt. 5:10; 2 Tim. 3:12)

***“Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you  
and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me.  
Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven,  
for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”***  
**Matt. 5:11,12**

***“So then, those who suffer according to God’s will  
should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good.”***  
**1 Pet. 4:19**

It is highly recommended that those who are married read *The Christian: Called to Sexual Purity*, published by Called to Obedience Ministries. Many couples are lacking a biblical view of sexuality, which is explained in this book. Many aspects of sexuality are discussed including how to guard the mind, barriers to a God-glorifying relationship and how to redeem and maintain sexual purity in marriage.

- C. Developing oneness:** The husband and the wife commit to becoming one

***“...and they shall become one flesh.”***  
**Gen. 2:24b NASB**

1. Sexual unity, becoming one flesh, is a giving over of one’s body and emotions fully and intimately to the spouse.
  - a. Sexual involvement is designed **only** for the marriage relationship. (Heb. 13:4)

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- b. The sexual union is based on the biblical concept that the bodies of each spouse belong to the other. (1 Cor. 7:3-5)

***“The wife’s body does not belong to her alone but also to her husband. In the same way, the husband’s body does not belong to him alone but also to his wife.”***

**1 Cor. 7:4**

2. God is referring not only sexual oneness, but also about a deep intimacy on every level of interaction - spiritual, emotional and sexual.

***“And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.”***

**Gen. 2:25 NASB**

- a. This verse refers not just to physical nudity, but infers a deep transparency of spiritual and emotional unity with one another.
  - b. “Naked” means to be laid bare, to be poured out completely; in other words, fully transparent with each other.
3. Oneness is also achieved through a husband’s loving leadership and a wife’s respectful submission. (Eph. 5:22-33)

### II. The fall of man continues to have a destructive impact on marriages. (Gen. 3:7-9)

#### A. The violation of God’s commandment caused the first husband and wife, Adam and Eve, to realize they were naked. See *Pride and Rebellion, CTO*.

1. They tried to cover themselves to hide from God and to hide from each other.
2. Husbands and wives continue to battle the same sins of pride, fear and self-protection, which are very destructive to the marriage relationship.
3. Each spouse should practice being open and vulnerable toward the other, regardless of pride, of fear or of the mate’s response.

#### B. God addressed the first man and woman. To the woman He said,

***“Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you.”***

**Gen. 3:16b**

1. “Desire” in Hebrew means to “control, impel.” Her sinful desire was to control her husband.
2. “Rule” in Hebrew means “to reign, set in office.”

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- C. Adam and Eve's sin was the first recorded role reversal in marriage.
1. Eve took the leadership in the relationship while Adam stood by and watched his wife sin. (Gen. 3:6b)
  2. Adam turned from submission to God's authority and abdicated his leadership by choosing to follow his wife when she stood in opposition to God's command.
  3. Adam blamed Eve, which is often the way a husband responds to a wife who usurps his leadership. (Gen. 3:12)
  4. God rebuked Adam for listening to the voice of his wife. (Gen. 3:17a)
  5. Chaos and the erosion of a relationship with God and with each other occurs when marriage roles are reversed.
- D. The **major pitfalls** of a Christian marriage:
1. The husband is keenly aware of God's commands to his wife.
  2. The wife is keenly aware of God's commands to her husband.
  3. The husband blames the wife (and the wife blames the husband) for not obeying God's commands and therefore, the resulting marriage problems are the other's fault. (Matt. 7:1-5)
  4. The focus becomes the spouse's sins rather than each focusing on God, His Word and submitting to His truths. (Heb. 12:1,2a)
    - a. Each spouse excuses his/her own sin and/or is blinded to it because he or she is so focused on the sins of the spouse.
    - b. The relationship often degenerates into repaying evil for evil. (Rom. 12:17-21; 1 Thess. 5:15)
  5. Neither is willing to be humble, to examine his/her own life and to follow God's commands of relating. (Col. 3:12-14; 1 Pet. 3:8-12)
  6. The cycle of sin-blame-sin-blame continues ~ the cycle that began with Adam and Eve. (Gen. 3:12,13)

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***“Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother’s eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.”***  
**Matt. 7:1-5**

- E. A Christian does not deserve nor cannot demand that his/her spouse submit to God’s commands and perfect design for marriage.
1. This truth often is misconstrued in the following erroneous thoughts:
    - a. “I must have an obedient spouse to be fulfilled because this is God’s will for my marriage.”
    - b. “God does not want me to live with this difficult mate because He said that two shall be one, and we are definitely not one!”
  2. These lies of Satan influence the Christian
    - a. to believe that he cannot be content and fulfilled in a relationship with Christ, no matter how disobedient his spouse is. (Phil. 4:11; 1 Tim. 6:6)
    - b. to be confused about God’s predestined will for his life, which may include suffering in a difficult marriage. (Phil. 1:29; 1 Pet. 4:12-16)
    - c. to believe he should not have to endure the consequences of his past and present sinful choices.
  3. The perfect standard and design for marriage is set by God, but perfection is not possible because two sinners have married!
  4. The diagrams, *Unbiblical Goal Orientation* and *Biblical Goal Orientation*, *CTO*, should encourage you to see God’s purpose in living with difficult mate.

Great hope lies in learning how to recognize and deal with your sin biblically. The following two studies about the roles of the husband and wife in this book will encourage you to submit to God’s purpose, design and commands, regardless of your spouse’s disobedience.

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## III. God created marriage for specific purposes.

God created the universe, the earth, the animals and a man. He pronounced all His creation, “good.” The first thing he declared as “not good” was man being alone. Recognizing man would desire companionship, God decided to make a helper who would be suitable for him. He created a woman to fulfill the role of friend, lover and helper to her husband.

### A. The husband and wife should have a “being” relationship.

1. The husband and wife, according to God’s standard, are to become “one flesh,” to have deep unity physically, emotionally and spiritually. (Gen. 2:24)
2. The husband and wife should strive to
  - a. keep their sexual relationship undefiled. (Heb. 13:4)
  - b. be in one mind, purpose and spirit. (Phil 2:2)
  - c. put the other first. (Phil. 2:3)
  - d. live out all the “one anothering” commands within the framework of marriage.
3. The husband and wife represent the mystical, permanent union of Christ and His Church: Christ, the Bridegroom and His Church, the Bride. (Eph. 5:23-32)
4. The husband and wife are to be life-long companions and intimate friends. (Gen. 2:18; Mal. 2:14b)
5. They should be transparent, sharing emotional pain, joys, concerns, admonishments, accountability, forgiveness, repentance and reconciliation.

### B. The husband and wife should have a “doing” relationship.

1. Creating a family and a home (Gen. 1:28)
2. Ministering as the salt and light of the world (Matt. 5:13-16)
3. Enjoying, as fellow partakers, of the variety of pursuits God provides that are glorifying to Him (1 Tim. 6:17)

### C. The husband and wife should parallel the believer’s intimate “being” relationship with Christ.

1. It requires “death to self” to become one with God and with one’s spouse.

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2. Believers, who substitute a “doing” relationship with Christ for an intimate “being” relationship, may have marriages that are also characterized by a superficial doing relationship.
  - a. Deep emotional and spiritual oneness are lacking.
  - b. Couples are often unaware that they lack the real thing.
  - c. Communication is often characterized by dealing with the day to day problems of family living rather than communicating on deeper levels.
  - d. Busyness and preoccupation with other things often lead to death of oneness in marriage and a false belief that there is a lack of time to develop it.
- D. The husband and the wife are commanded to “be fruitful and increase in number.” (Gen. 1:28)

#### IV. Marriage becomes the foundation of the family unit.

- A. The intimate “being” relationship of the husband and wife flows out to children, creating a warmth, intimacy and vulnerability with the children.
- B. The outflow of the “being” relationship of the family unit will be a desire to “do” things together - activities, chores, service, ministry.
- C. The family unit is the *arena* God chooses to have His principles for living developed in a highly contained environment of physical, emotional and spiritual intimacy through
  1. living under God’s authority structure.
  2. demonstrating unconditional love and forgiveness.
  3. admonishing in a respectful, loving manner.
  4. providing mutual availability, accountability, vulnerability and “one anothering.”
- D. The parents must provide biblical teaching and training to their children as an outflow of their relationships with God and each other through
  1. the role modeling of their lives, which is the greatest vehicle of teaching.
  2. the imparting of God’s truths in formal and informal settings. (Deut. 6:6-9)
  3. the giving of consistent guidance, admonishment and discipline.

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4. the training of the children how to love and to serve God and others.
- E. The husband and wife are to create a godly home, which
1. encourages each family member to develop a *mindset* of giving their lives to God's kingdom purposes, both in and outside the home. (Matt. 6:33)
  2. is an arena for developing a lifestyle of ministry to those who are needy - spiritually, emotionally and physically.
  3. is **a place of welcoming love!**

*“Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good.  
Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves.  
Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord.  
Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.  
Share with God's people who are in need. Practice hospitality.  
Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.  
Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn.  
Live in harmony with one another.”*

**Rom. 12:9-16a**