

You Can  
Build a Happy  
**MARRIAGE**

*by* David C. Pack

Herbert W. Armstrong led the Worldwide Church of God (formerly The Radio Church of God until 1968) until his death in 1986. Hundreds of millions heard his voice and read his literature. God called him in the fall of 1926 and he was converted in the spring of 1927. Over the course of Mr. Armstrong's ministry, God revealed through him a great many true biblical doctrines, which had been lost to the Church through the centuries. After his death, his successors ceased to believe and teach these doctrines. Although copyright law prohibits The Restored Church of God from reproducing and distributing literature produced while he led the Worldwide Church of God, we are committed to the preservation and teaching of all of these truths!

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Most married couples lack *true* happiness—and have no idea how to build it. GOD instituted the marriage covenant—and the *principles* governing its success. Without them, *real* happiness is impossible. With them, YOU can experience a boundless JOY you have never known!

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How many *truly* happy married couples do you know?—and are you even sure of these? Is *your* marriage happy? Are you enjoying the life you anticipated? Statistics suggest the answer is probably “No.”

Most married people are *unhappy*—with many a virtual study in misery. They have no idea what to do about it or where to turn for answers. Millions stumble along, bouncing off one marital problem into another, never knowing how to address them—let alone SOLVE them!

Married life has been the brunt of endless jokes, where traditional conduct and the roles of husbands and wives are ridiculed—and depicted as a bondage that only foolish people enter. Many equate marriage to surrendering their “freedom” to a lesser, unhappy state of existence.

Others choose to marry, sincerely believing they will find perfect bliss—they will “live on love”—only to discover that true happiness is far from automatic. Some even conclude, often within days, that marriage was the worst decision of their life.

Sadly, so many enter marriage with no understanding, no preparation, no training and no idea of how to achieve a lifetime of happiness with their chosen partner. Many couples spend far more time planning for a one-day *wedding* than for the lifelong *marriage* that should follow it. As a result, over half of all marriages fail, ending in divorce, often with former partners becoming *mortal enemies*! Other couples are just as unhappy, but perhaps cannot afford a divorce, or stay together only because of the children or other social or business reasons.

How tragic! And how completely unnecessary!

### Programmed to Fail

Why have so few been able to find even a measure of the enjoyment they originally believed marriage would bring? Why have so many others decided to simply live together, avoiding commitment, thus artificially reducing the already skyrocketing number of divorces? Why do so many openly admit that they do not trust their mate? Why do over 80 percent of marriages experience adultery? Why such rampant confusion about marriage and its purpose?

What has brought the once sacred institution of marriage to such a deplorable state of affairs?

This is no accident. The fact that marriage has been the subject of endless jokes is only the beginning of the story.

Consider how marriage is routinely portrayed in the media. Reflect on the many television programs that countless millions of people have been watching for decades. Gone are *Ozzie and Harriet* (the Nelsons), *Leave it to Beaver* (the Cleavers), *The Waltons*, *Little House on the Prairie* and similar more wholesome pictures of families from the 50s, 60s and early 70s. In their place came *All in the Family* (Archie Bunker), *Roseanne*, *The Simpsons*, *The Osbournes*, *Friends*, *Will and Grace*, *Everybody Loves Raymond*, *Married With Children*, *That 70s Show*, *Family Guy*, *Keeping Up with the Kardashians*, *Modern Family* and others too numerous to mention.

Books and movies have also extended and worsened this decline in every way. Fornication, cohabitation, adultery, homosexuality and every other conceivable “alternative lifestyle,” now including same-sex “marriage,” have been depicted thousands and thousands of times in the media. Invariably, such programs, movies and books have described rampant immorality as exciting, fascinating, mysterious—and the virtual “norm” for what is now the great majority.

Their impact on marriage has been stunning. Marriage has become a laughingstock. Wholesome images of marriages, families and role models of the past have almost disappeared. Sadly, many millions have copied the new, modern role models, discarding traditional marriages and families as obsolete relics that history has properly scrapped.

Recent generations have been conditioned to believe marriage is better “the second time around.” By this logic, the third marriage would be even better!

Accompanying these trends has been a corresponding decline in traditional values and the importance of character—all over the world. Under constant attack, standards of right and wrong—good and bad—old-fashioned “righteousness” and “unrighteousness”—have been blurring and crumbling. How many people any longer even speak of character, once called virtue?

With the steep decline in basic character has come an unwillingness to remain committed to vows exchanged on the wedding day. With the near disap-

pearance of ethics, standards, fundamental reality and basic knowledge of right and wrong, has come the assumption that when marriage difficulties arise, as they inevitably do with imperfect human beings, couples should simply take the easy way out—divorce!

### The Author of Marriage

Why do so few understand that there are great principles—SPIRITUAL LAWS!—governing what most think is merely a civil agreement? How many recognize that men and women have separate, different, God-ordained ROLES that must be understood for marriage to succeed? How many couples have been taught the real PURPOSE of marriage? Most no longer even know the ORIGIN of marriage, let alone the vital answers to these and other important related questions!

The answers to these questions are *revealed* knowledge—knowledge that men cannot themselves discern. God must REVEAL it.

In place of revealed truth, modern education has taught the great evolutionary lie—that life is continually evolving to a higher state. Scoffers, preferring to believe that human beings are a product of blind, dumb luck, dismiss the biblical account that God supernaturally created two literal people, Adam and Eve, and then identified them as history's first married couple.

Of course, those who believe the unproven *fiction* of evolution must also believe that, at some point, *men* devised the marriage institution. Believing otherwise is incompatible with evolution. One cannot have it both ways. Either God created marriage or men did.

But human beings did *not* create marriage! Therefore, apart from God, they cannot know its true purpose—or the KEYS to decades of happiness with the *same* person. It is not our purpose here to prove that God exists or that the Bible is His inspired Word. We have numerous other booklets that address these subjects. Therefore, we start with the fact that the Almighty God, who made the heavens and the Earth, also designed and created marriage. (To learn more about these topics, read our booklets *Does God Exist?*, *Bible Authority... Can It Be Proven?*, and *The Purpose of Marriage – Ever Obsolete?* as well as our book *Dating and Courtship – God's Way*.)

Though marriage appears to be merely a physical union, starting with a wedding ceremony performed by a man, it is actually a DIVINE INSTITUTION, created by *God*. As the true Author of marriage, God understands what makes it succeed, bringing supreme happiness and joy—or fail, ending in divorce and broken lives. This same God clearly reveals this knowledge in His Word.

For every effect, there is a cause. When a marriage experiences all the *right effects*, yielding happiness, it is because RIGHT CAUSES have been understood and practiced. When a marriage is filled with problems of every sort, causing great unhappiness, *right* causes have been either unknown or ignored.

The Creator God designed marriage to be a source of great happiness, something every couple yearns for. *You* can have an exciting, happy, successful marriage, but only if you follow God's prescribed formula. This booklet reveals the formula—the CAUSES—behind a happy marriage. It reveals the plain truth of how to build a wonderful, joyful marriage. We will examine basic principles, unknown to all but a very few who are willing to truly study and believe God's Word to see what He instructs.

### God's Instructions from the Beginning

The first biblical reference to marriage is in Genesis 2. It describes Adam and Eve being brought together by God, forming the first marital union of a man and a woman in history. The account begins in verse 18.

Notice: "And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet [Hebrew: "fit or suitable"] for him."

God explains that men and women were not *designed* to be alone. People never work as well—are not as productive—when they are alone. Men were created—designed—to need an assistant, a help, another person to stand beside them. Of course, the woman is also aided by the man in a variety of ways.

Studies show that the average person becomes happier after marriage. This increase has actually been measured, with these studies showing that, no matter the person's prior level of happiness, it receives at least a small boost.

Verses 19 and 20 describe Adam looking at all the animals God had created and finding none suitable for him. So, in verse 21, God put him to sleep, took a rib from his side, and created the woman: "And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made [Hebrew: "buildded"] He a woman, and brought her unto the man" (vs. 22).

Now notice verse 23. Adam realized that the woman was literally part of him—that she had come *from him*: "And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man."

Here is God's first recorded instruction about the marriage institution. Next, He tells Adam and Eve what to do, once married: "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh. And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed" (vs. 24-25).

Married couples are to live together, forming a *new* household, apart from their parents. The reference to "and they shall be one flesh," is a picture of sexual relations within marriage. The verse is explaining where sexual relations belong—*within* marriage!

This account establishes marriage as God-ordained! This institution was created, designed, and presented to the first human couple—Adam and Eve—as the way God intended the two sexes to live together.

Now notice this passage in Ecclesiastes. Solomon, the wisest man of all time, describes why the joining of two people is better than one alone: “Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labor” (4:9).

Verse 10 continues to explain the advantages of being married: “For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him that is alone when he falls; for he has not another to help him up.” Now notice verse 11: “Again, if two lie together, then they have heat: but how can one be warm alone?”

Verse 12 adds, “And if one prevail against him, two shall withstand him; and a threefold cord is not quickly broken.” Notice the phrase “and a *threefold* cord is not quickly broken.” This establishes the minimum number to be a family. One child makes any couple “threefold.” To be a rope—a “cord”—a minimum of three strands is required, making it possible to weave them together. Each *additional* child further strengthens the marriage, makes the rope stronger, binds the family, making it harder for a couple to break up. God explains that producing a family is central to marriage. Adam and Eve had been told, “be fruitful, and multiply” (Gen. 1:28).

### The Husband’s Responsibility

The most important New Testament passage about marriage and the specific role of husbands and wives is Ephesians 5:22-33. This passage describes the most fundamental understanding each partner must bring to the marriage.

Beginning in verse 25, God describes, through Paul, instruction to the husband: “Husbands, *love your wives*, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it.” This emphasizes the importance of husbands showing a real, sincere, deep love for their wives!

The husband’s first and greatest responsibility is to unfailingly love his wife! Initially, many husbands try to do this, but their effort wanes over time. Men often begin to take their wives for granted, not realizing they are to love them “as Christ loved the Church.” This is the extremely high standard God sets—an unending, boundless love, paralleling the way Christ cares about His bride, the Church. Christ never gives up on the Church, but rather forgives, understands, is patient with, tolerates and works with His wife-to-be.

The next several verses describe *how* Christ works with the Church—how a husband should treat his wife. This example culminates in verses 28-29 with this instruction: “So ought men to *love their wives* as their own bodies. He that loves his wife loves himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourishes and cherishes it, *even as the Lord the church.*”

These are powerful words, especially the end of verse 29. They show an undying, never-ending, outgoing concern for the wife on the part of the husband. He is to love her as much as he loves himself. That is a tall order, but it is a reflection of the fact that the first woman (as a type of all women) literally came from a man—from his flesh.

Verses 30-31 speak directly of Genesis 2. Here, Paul explains that his instruction about marriage derives directly from the passage we have already read. The New Testament supports the Old. Notice: “For we are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh.”

Now read verse 33. It summarizes the husband’s role and introduces the most important aspect of the wife’s role, what *she* must understand in the marriage: “Nevertheless let everyone of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence [respect] her husband.”

### The Wife’s Responsibility

What about wives? What is the most important aspect—responsibility—that God requires her to perform in marriage? Let’s now read the most crucial obligation for wives. Few married couples understand this great point.

Notice verse 22: “Wives, *submit yourselves* unto your own husbands, *as unto the Lord*.” Society has completely reversed, even denigrated, what we are reading from the pages of the Bible. Yet, this is what God, as the Author of marriage and what makes it work, requires of the woman.

Most women are taught today that they are equal in authority to their husband. Certainly women *are* equal before God as human beings. Men are not more important or better than women. But God places the man in charge of the marriage. This verse is plain.

The typical marriage counselor scorns this principle, seeing it as archaic, out-of-date, out-of-step. Very few brides-to-be enter marriage having been taught anything about being subject to their husband’s loving authority. Most would ridicule and outright reject this idea!

Some years ago, I performed a wedding where almost none of the audience was familiar with Ephesians 5. During the ceremony, as this and related scriptures were read, the wife vowed to submit herself—be subject—to her husband. We heard snickering from a number of the more “sophisticated” women in the audience. Afterwards, several approached the bride, kidding her and asking her if she “really meant it” or if it was “just for the ceremony?”

Virtually all were hoping that she did *not* really mean what she said—that it was mere formality. A couple of the women actually approached me about how “novel” and “sweet” it was that some women could still think this way. Of course, the implication in their voices was that it would certainly never be this way in *their* marriages.

What was most astonishing was perhaps not that these women disagreed with wives submitting to their husbands, but rather that they viewed the exchange of *solemn vows* to God’s command as little more than a formality—a statement made for show!

No wonder so many marriages do not last even five years. While all couples want to be happy, almost none follow God's formula for achieving it. Then they wonder why they are miserable!

### Parallel of Christ and the Church

Now notice the next two verses in Ephesians 5: "For the husband is the *head* of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and He is the Savior of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands *in everything*" (vs. 23-24).

This passage is also most clear. Not only is the husband the head of the wife—her leader—but, as with how the husband loves his wife, this also parallels the way Christ heads the Church. Certainly, the Church is not *equal* in authority with Christ. All who believe this verse must recognize that the woman is under her husband's authority.

God leaves no doubt that the husband is the leader—pacesetter—in the home. His *example* must stand out as a *leader*—not just as one who is "in charge," throwing his weight around, saying, "I'm the boss!" Remember, he is to *love* his wife. His leadership, as head of the home, must reflect God's love. But the woman must submit herself to him. No man can lead a woman who will not yield to his authority.

Remember, verse 24 revealed that the woman is subject unto her own husband "as the church is subject unto Christ." This leaves no room for both partners being in charge.

Try telling the owner or CEO of a company that his employees should have an equal say in decisions—or a President or Prime Minister that the citizenry should be able to overrule his government—or a football coach that his players should be able to take over the team whenever they see fit.

In every organization, institution, company, football team, nation, military branch or other entity, someone has to ultimately be in charge. The governments and organizations of this world all recognize this. No one would consider joining a football team where all the players were equal with the coach. That would bring chaos—and probably every game would end in defeat.

Why, then, cannot millions of people recognize that *marriage* is no different—that the most basic unit of all societies, the *family*, must have a final decision-maker? Someone must be in charge! As children appear in the family, they must know who is the leader and who is the assistant. In Genesis, God had said that the woman was the "help" to the man—she was his assistant, and was made "suitable" for him as an assistant.

Understand that this overall pattern for marriage must be accepted as God's blueprint—the fundamental *starting point* for a marriage to have any hope of success. Again, the marriage "experts" and even the ministers of this world disagree. The terrible fruits of their instruction, that men and women are equals—*both* in charge—prove they do not know what they are talking

about! Because most do not examine God's Word to see this pattern explained, divorce is exploding in most of the countries and cultures of the world.

### How it Works

Today, many men are unwilling to take the lead in marriage. Of course, many get married only to find that their wife has no intention of letting them be in charge. This is another problem.

Society has seen the near disappearance of strong leadership, with most men no longer knowing *how* to lead. This creates a crucial void in the marriage—and it frustrates women, who were designed by God to most naturally *follow* the strong but loving lead of a wise man. Women were designed to need to know that their husbands love them, and will provide for and take care of them. A woman should feel that, if necessary, her husband will defend her with his life (Eph. 5:25)!

Understanding these things leaves a woman much more secure and comfortable in the role of follower.

The woman married to a man who will not lead will spend her marriage frustrated, unable to know when to passively accept indecision or to speak up and take action, because her husband will not. Many women are forced to step into a leadership void in their homes, because the man *will not* fill it—and somebody has to. Somebody has to take the lead whenever any two or more people do *anything*!

On the other hand, some men view their role as a husband leading a wife like a drill sergeant leading raw recruits. They try to *drive* their wives, bossing them around, frustrating and squelching them.

No woman wants to feel that her opinions do not count—that her views do not matter, because the man “knows everything.” This is no better, and is even in some ways worse, than a marriage in which the man will not lead at all. For a marriage to achieve the happiness and peace that God intends, both these extremes *must* be avoided.

Husbands should gently and lovingly lead their wives, drawing them out, asking their advice—and using it when appropriate. The wise husband knows that his wife is his *best advisor*—that she knows him best and knows how to compensate for his areas of weakness.

In Colossians, Paul repeats, in synopsis form, the instruction to husbands and wives. As with Ephesians, the wife's responsibility is listed first. Notice: “WIVES, *submit* yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord. HUSBANDS, *love* your wives, and be not bitter against them” (3:18-19).

The reason the wife's role is given first is because family government must be established before anything productive can be accomplished. Again, the husband must *lovingly* lead the wife—and that is why God inspires Paul to record this twice. But if the wife does not submit, the marriage will not last. All the love in the world from the husband will not keep a marriage together

if the wife is determined to be in charge. Also, all the family “government” in the world will not keep it together if the husband does not truly love his wife.

No successful marriage can have one—either one—without the other!

Another vital point must be understood. Since obviously the wife must also love her husband, and this has not been stated directly, the husband must also periodically (this *has* been alluded to) be willing to yield to the wife’s wiser position or view on any given matter. He must be humble enough to take her advice when her plan is better than his own. Incidentally, feeling more appreciated, understood and valued, the woman’s love for her husband will *grow*!

Husbands, be wise enough and willing to seek your wife’s counsel. Strive to train yourself to *want* her ideas. Remember, when combined, two partially good ideas can become either a good, very good or even a wonderful idea!

Your wife has much to offer, but you must be willing to receive it.

### **The Weaker Vessel**

Being a leader sometimes means pointing out mistakes or weaknesses of those who follow you. Since this obviously includes wives, husbands should never do this unless they understand one of the basic differences between men and women.

Notice how God instructs husbands to understand these differences: “Likewise, you husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honor unto the wife, as unto the *weaker vessel*, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered” (I Pet. 3:7).

Did you notice the phrase “the weaker vessel”? Wives are *physically* weaker, and generally smaller than their husbands. Husbands must understand this. But this does not mean the woman is mentally or spiritually weaker than her husband.

If a man needs to bring a point to his wife’s attention, he must always be extremely gentle and kind in the way he presents it to her. He should strive to inspire and encourage his wife to do better. Remember, Colossians 3:19 instructed husbands to “be not bitter against” their wives. No one wants to be talked down to, demeaned, put down or made the brunt of jokes. He must leave his wife her dignity, understanding she is as important before God as he is. The harsh, bitter, verbally abusive husband, who belittles his wife, will answer to God for having taken his authority too far. No husband doing this loves his wife “as Christ loves the Church”!

### **Wives, Encourage Your Husbands**

Just as husbands are to continually encourage their wives, so should wives do this with their husbands. Men need encouragement—sometimes lots of it. They need to be inspired to success by their wives and told that they can achieve

and do more than they believe possible. Nothing means more to a husband than hearing that his wife believes in him, stands behind him, knows and is confident that he will accomplish what he has set out to do. He must *hear* your support on a regular basis.

Wives, be sure that you do this gently, without driving, badgering or nagging your husband to success. And be sure you want him to be successful for the *right reasons*—because it is good for him, the family and the marriage, not just good for you.

Of course, a man should encourage his wife for the exact same reasons. He should also want her to fulfill her potential.

Partners in marriage should want each other to be all they can be—to see them grow beyond where they are, accomplish more, utilize their talents, bringing greater happiness to each other and the marriage as a whole.

Wives, understand that your husband is under pressure on the job. It is not easy to go to work in this world. Obviously, some of you hold full-time jobs. If so, you know the tremendous pressure and difficulty of the work-a-day world. This is a stressful age, perhaps the most stressful the world has ever seen. Encourage your husband if he is under strain—and husbands should obviously encourage their wives if they are under unusual pressure in the home. In either case, each partner should understand the other's point of view—what the other may be enduring—what his or her day was like—trying to be reassuring, patient, tolerant of the mate's occasional discouragement.

Always strive to lift each other up, reflecting to your spouse the big picture of where the marriage is going. “Accentuate the positive! Eliminate the negative! And don't mess with Mr. In-between,” as the old saying goes.

This is not just a cliché. It truly works, if you work at practicing these things with each another. Encouraging language means so much to people who are tired, discouraged, depressed or frustrated!

### **The Fine Art of Right Communication**

Miscommunication, bad communication or a lack of communication is one of the leading causes of divorce. The role of the husband is to try to take the lead in proper communication with his wife.

Husbands must understand that the wife has often been home all day with the children. She may be frustrated and in desperate need of conversation with someone above the age of 5—or even 15. The husband who comes home from work not wanting to talk, but rather to just sit down, have a beer, read the paper and watch the news, has effectively cut his wife off from communication with another adult.

Do not forget about her needs. Talk to her. Find out about *her* day. Show interest in what she has accomplished and what may have happened with the children. Sit down with her and allow her to open up about what was important in the last 8 to 12 hours of her life.

I remember that my parents always stopped what they were doing in order to sit down and share what had happened in their day. My mother *always* immediately stopped whatever she was doing when my father got home so that he could tell her of his travels. For many years, my father was a very successful salesman. My mother wanted to hear about prospects he had pursued. But their discussions always ended with him showing interest in her day. My father always wanted to hear how “things had gone with the children”—and whatever else had happened. They practiced this throughout my childhood.

Husbands: Ask questions. Bring things up. Strive to always take the lead in communication. Discuss the finances. Discuss goals that have been set, and possibly achieved, while always recognizing that your tone of voice is important. Women are very sensitive to tone of voice—whether it is harsh and superior, or tender, understanding and concerned.

The strong silent type may work in the movies, but it does not work well in marriage. The greatest single way to frustrate one another is to not communicate with each other. Invariably, this problem starts with the husband. But it may not end there.

Wives, be sure that you open up to your husband. You may be by nature “more verbal” or “less verbal” than he is. Depending upon which is the case, strive to do a little more listening, or a little more talking. The couple should strive to find a balance in communication, with each expressing an opinion about the things on their minds.

Husbands and wives should both always remember to discuss their problems with each other, while relying on God for ultimate spiritual understanding. All problems should always be discussed with God. Wives, particularly, should discuss their spiritual problems with their husbands, while never neglecting to remember that God is the One ultimately guiding and helping them spiritually. Your husband cannot grant you salvation.

It is actually a form of adultery to discuss intimate (even non-sexual) problems with someone other than your mate. This is a form of disloyalty—sharing *outside* the marriage things that are highly personal to the marriage. Proper communication within marriage means never “airing dirty laundry” or personal problems outside the marriage! Yet, a wife must always feel as though she can also seek spiritual counsel from her minister (those who are true ministers of God). Her husband has no authority to block her from doing this by requiring her to receive *all* spiritual counsel from him. He must recognize that he may not be qualified to guide her in certain areas of spiritual development.

Share yourself with one another. Open up! It is a serious mistake to not communicate in marriage. This causes couples to grow distant from one another, feeling that they do not know what is on the mind of the other. Invariably, this leads to *real* distance, often followed by the ultimate distance between two partners—divorce! How sad when two people who seemingly once could not find enough time to discuss all the things that were on each other’s mind, find themselves no longer interested in any kind of conversation.

On a final note, avoid arguing at all costs. *NOTHING* productive ever comes from heated exchanges. The devastating effect of this kind of “communication” lasts longer, and bites deeper, than the couple doing it even begins to realize. If you are wrong, always apologize. Defending the indefensible is silly and unproductive. Never store up feelings and then dump them in a heated moment of release. Be sure that your conversation reflects what you would like to hear from your husband or wife. The Golden Rule—“Do unto others as you would have them do unto you”—is also the greatest rule of communication within marriage!

### “Keepers at Home”

As mentioned, society has taught women that they can achieve greater success—be more “complete” and “fulfilled”—if they leave the home to enter the work-a-day world. They are taught to compete with men in the corporate arena. The problem with this is that *God* reveals that this is not a woman’s natural role. Let’s examine what He says *is* her natural role.

Notice Paul’s instruction to younger women in the Church: “That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, *keepers at home*, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not *blasphemed*” (Titus 2:4-5).

This is a powerful passage, containing many helpful points for young women in particular and all women in general. Read each phrase carefully and notice how older women (vs. 3) are to teach younger women these things. This is rarely done anymore because most younger women now have no interest in being taught *anything*—let alone “old values” by “old ladies.”

This verse teaches that wives should love their husbands and children. This is more obvious. But verse 5 explains that they are also to be “keepers at home,” as well as “good, obedient to their own husbands.” This is so vital to recognize that God ties it directly to “that the word of God be not blasphemed.”

Wives were designed to be “keepers at home.” They should take care of the needs there, recognizing that men do not naturally think in this way. Women were engineered to think of the little needs that make a home friendly, warm and special to all who share it with her. Men are not able to do this even remotely as well as women.

Wives: Take time to think about how you can improve the environment in which you live—in which your children are growing up to become adults and parents themselves. What special things can you do, depending upon the budget you have to work with? Do not sell short how much you can do, if you are industrious, creative and determined!

In this same regard, wives should try to fulfill the little needs in their marriage that are going unfulfilled. Remember, “two are better than one,” and the woman is an assistant to her husband. God knows that no man is complete

without an effective assistant looking to all the little needs, which he was not created to notice.

I have counseled hundreds of marriages, and rarely have I seen men recognize the home's less obvious needs as well as does the wife and mother. The astute husband recognizes this. He understands and accepts that he was not created—not designed—to see what is less obvious. The wise wife and mother recognizes that she was!—and that it is *her* responsibility to fulfill these little needs in the marriage. She takes care of the issues and concerns that would otherwise never be addressed!

### **A Career Outside the Home?**

The question arises: Should mothers, with children at home, work outside the home? Some women simply *must* do this. They have no choice because the financial circumstances of their marriages or families require it. Others merely *think* they have no choice. Millions of women have been conditioned to believe they should enter the workforce—that this is where they belong. Yet, this is most often done to pursue material *wants* more than real *needs*.

This world has programmed families to believe that happiness primarily flows from how many things they have, instead of quality time shared together doing relatively inexpensive things with people of similar values and goals.

If you choose to work outside the home, there will be many hidden costs. In countless ways, many of which you are probably not aware or prepared for, your children will pay the biggest price. For instance, they will not have your consistent guiding attention, necessary and important daily conversation time, help with schoolwork, involvement in afterschool activities and sports, and much more.

There are other hidden costs—clothing for work, daycare fees, automobile expenses, poorer meal planning, coupled with more expensive, but less nutritious, food quality, a large percentage of your income simply going for additional taxes, as well as the ongoing loss of time to do many other things, then no longer possible. Also, details in the home will go begging, taking its own toll on the enjoyment of living there.

All this will bring fatigue, extending your physical limitations, possibly jeopardizing your health, also usually at some additional financial cost. There are other costs and negative effects almost too numerous to mention.

If you are going to pursue a career, carefully discuss—together—whether it is really necessary, and at what price it will come. You will be glad you did.

### **Little Things Mean a Lot**

Let's return to the husbands. Recognize that little acknowledgements are far more important to your wife than you may believe—or than you may have

been taught to understand while growing up. Women like to be recognized for what they do. There is an old cliché: “If you like it, say so.” Husbands, this means you.

If your wife has cooked something special, thank her. If she bought a new dress and it looks particularly good, compliment her—even finding something good to say if you do not especially like the dress. If she is wearing a new perfume, tell her if you like it. If she has moved the furniture around, as women often enjoy doing, appreciate it. If she has baked a special dessert, comment on it, notice it. No matter how small an item may be to you, it may be very important to your wife that you notice and validate what she has done.

Do not ever underestimate the importance of how little things mean a lot. Recognize the important contributions of the person you are married to. So many husbands are too focused on themselves, not caring about all the little things their wives quietly do for them.

If your wife is handling many necessary details for you, recognize that it is extremely important to her that you appreciate, with just a few seconds of compliment, what may have taken her hours or days to achieve.

*Look* for what she has done, perhaps bringing home a gift reflecting your appreciation. Recognize that a single rose or a card—or both—is a wonderful way to let her know that what she did was noticed. She will love you for it!

Also recognize that your children, if they see this kind of outgoing concern and interest, will see that their father loves and appreciates their mother. This will give such children confidence and peace that they are in a happy, loving home, led by parents who care about each other and, therefore, care about them. (Also, you are quietly programming this into their future marriages, and indirectly helping your grandchildren!)

I cannot overstate the importance of husbands setting this kind of tone within the family!

### **A Reflection of Your Husband**

The Bible explains that the wife is actually a reflection of her husband. This reflection actually gives the wife extraordinary power over the effectiveness and ultimate success of her husband.

Notice this fascinating verse from Proverbs. Wives, never forget this: “A virtuous woman is a *crown* to her husband: but she that makes ashamed is as rottenness in his bones” (12:4).

The woman of character is actually a beautiful “crown to her husband’s” head. So says God. Wives, see yourselves as having the potential of developing into a dazzling, magnificent, bejeweled, glittering, stunning CROWN worn atop the man to whom you are married. What an honorable and wonderful goal to aspire to! The alternative is “rottenness to his bones.”

God says, “the woman is the glory of the man” (I Cor. 11:7). Certainly any woman, worn as a beautiful crown by her husband, *is* truly the glory of that man.

Those who wear crowns are *kings*. Any wife wanting to be married to a king can crown him with herself! You can be his “glory.” Do not sell short your ability to make your husband into a king in the sight of men and God.

Now consider this, wives. Women married to kings are *queens*! When you crown your husband, making him a king, you have made yourself a queen! This is the message of Proverbs 12:4. Do you want to be a QUEEN? Then make your husband a king. Understand this. But remember that queens usually have great character, dignity, grooming and carriage. If you have built strong character, then God says that you have become a queen—and this *automatically* crowns your husband a KING!

The husband should encourage his wife to become herself. Do not try to make her over in your image. When you married her—and this goes for wives as well—you married a particular, specific person. She came with certain strengths and weaknesses, certain abilities and voids, and a certain type of personality. Do not try to make her into something that she is not. If you do, the results will be devastating to her—and your marriage.

Inspire your wife to become all that she can naturally be. Encourage her to be a wise steward of her natural talents and interests—and take an interest in what these are. While never *driving* her to achieve her potential, inspire her to do so, reminding her that she can be more than what she may feel herself capable of becoming. Encourage her not to limit herself—and watch her rise to the occasion—in this case, the occasion is *an entire lifetime* of being more than she ever dreamed possible, and maybe more than you ever dreamed when you married her!

Your wife will tend to become what you want and inspire her to be. You can inspire her to be a slave, hag or plain Jane—or a wonderful mother, wife, princess or queen.

Proverbs 31:10 asks, “Who can find a virtuous woman? For her price is far above rubies.” Rubies are worth more than diamonds, emeralds or sapphires, and are considered the most valuable of precious stones. Your wife has the potential, if she develops her character (“virtue”), to achieve greatness she has never envisioned.

Husbands have the power to help their wives achieve extraordinary things. And remember, if you inspire your wife to become a queen, you help her become a crown to your head—and *yourself* to become a king!

### **Manage Your Finances Together**

All wage earners are paid a specific amount of money. Whether large or small, this is the amount they must live within. There are no exceptions. Financial problems, usually brought by people living beyond their means, along with

poor communication and sexual relations problems, form the “big three” causes for marital break-up.

Our booklet *Taking Charge of Your Finances* offers many principles that can be applied in your marriage.

Here are a few helpful points:

- **Develop the habit of systematic, monthly saving early in your marriage.** Both partners must understand what this amount is—and try to never draw from it, except in emergencies. Talk about and understand why you are saving for the future. This is prudent for a host of reasons.

- **Avoid credit buying.** It is a trap far deeper than it appears. If you do use credit cards, pay them off immediately every month. This means thoughtful and regular discussion between husbands and wives, so that unnecessary or hidden spending does not get away from the family. While using credit cards is very easy, repaying their debt can be very difficult, if they are abused even a little bit. Avoid the trap.

- **Teach your children to budget.** If you do, you will give them one of the greatest gifts any parent can give. If you teach them well, you will save them untold horror. This will also help you remember to carefully manage *your* income, because you will be conscious of the example you are setting.

- **Plan your purchases.** Develop priorities so that you do not try to buy everything at once. Then, determine to buy quality as much as possible. There is an old saying: “It is expensive to be poor.” When you buy cheap quality, which may cost half or two-thirds as much as a better brand, it may only last a third as long and then you will have to replace it. Practice patience. Save for QUALITY—you will be glad you did!

### A Proper Understanding of Sex

Earlier, we read that God said, “and they shall be one flesh” (Gen. 2:24). This was followed with “and they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed” (vs. 25).

Sex is a natural part of marriage. However, many people enter marriage without a proper understanding of the role of sex. God instructed married couples to enjoy a right and fulfilling sexual relationship.

Recognize that when you entered marriage, you may not have properly understood sex within the “marriage bed.” Notice this: “Marriage is honorable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge” (Heb. 13:4).

Both parties must strive to grow in sexual understanding—to not be inhibited by ignorance or poor communication. God states, “The marriage bed is *undefiled*.” There is nothing wrong or inherently evil about sex.

While this is a large subject, requiring an entire book to properly explain, I will at least briefly comment on it here. (Our book *Sex – Its Unknown Dimension* explains more about this topic.)

God wants husbands and wives to be sexually fulfilled. He does not want repressed, frustrated partners, who do not understand that proper sexual relations involve *basic knowledge*—information that must be known to avoid unhappiness and lack of fulfillment.

If husbands lack basic knowledge of sex, they must sweep away pride. Seek help—get counsel. One must have at least a minimum understanding in this area for relations in marriage to be fulfilling. The same is true of wives. They must not be frigid. God says to be “one flesh” within marriage—and this refers to sexual relations.

Properly understood sex, practiced within marriage, binds a husband and wife in a unique and wonderful way. There is nothing dirty about sex when it is in marriage. Rather, it is beautiful, when practiced between two people who deeply love each other, who have chosen to share their lives together.

Neither mate has the right to withhold sex from the other. Notice: “Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence [sexual responsibility]: and likewise also the wife unto the husband. The wife has not power of her own body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband has not power of his own body, but the wife. Defraud you not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that you may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that *Satan tempt* you not for your incontinency” (I Cor. 7:3-5).

There is valuable instruction here. Husbands and wives have a “sexual responsibility” to each other, with verse 4 revealing that, after marriage, your body belongs to your mate. The wife then owns—has “power” over—the husband’s body, and the husband owns—has “power” over—the wife’s body.

God explains that couples must never “defraud...the other.” While there could be times when, for *spiritual* reasons, a couple avoids sexual relations, this should always be followed by a resumption of normal relations—to avoid “incontinency” (or lack of continuation). Ignoring this brings the danger of adultery into the marriage—“Satan’s temptation” to find fulfillment elsewhere.

Adultery—sexual relations with anyone other than one’s mate—is at virtual epidemic levels throughout all Western nations. Fifty percent of all women and sixty-six percent of all men admit to periodic adultery. This means that, because some marriages only have one partner committing adultery, over eighty percent of marriages suffer adultery. Infidelity, when discovered, is devastating to a marriage. But even if it is never discovered, it has a direct and harmful effect on the marriage. Trust has been broken. Disloyalty has been demonstrated—and if found out, the likely result is divorce and tremendous pain to many parties—especially any children of that union.

Incidentally, children who are products of divorce—for adultery or any reason—develop severe emotional and psychological problems, usually unrecognized by the children themselves. Later, after getting married, these problems surface—and often continue the cycle of divorce learned in the early years. It is as though children have been “wired” incorrectly by divorce. All children were designed by God to have a loving father and mother present in the home,

not to be ping-ponged back and forth between two people who often use them as pawns, sometimes leaving them almost ruined in regard to developing their own happy marriage. (To learn more about this topic, read our booklet *Understanding Divorce and Remarriage*.)

For decades, “girl watching” and “boy watching” have been national pastimes. Millions routinely lust after men and women to whom they are not married. Christ said, “whosoever looks on a woman to lust after her has committed adultery with her already *in his heart*” (Matt. 5:28). Recall Hebrews 13:4: “God will judge whoremongers and adulterers.” Adultery and “whoring around” will bring God’s certain judgment on those rejecting His boundaries for marriage.

Obedying this command of God presents a big challenge in this age because there are many pitfalls couples must avoid—sex is thrown at them from every direction!

Take charge of the sexual relations in your marriage. Always remember that faithfulness, mixed with a right and proper understanding of sex, is vitally important to building a wonderful, happy marriage.

Finally, never stop romancing each other. This should not cease after your wedding day. That was merely the point at which the romancing had been so successful, you decided to continue doing it for the rest of your lives. Planning special dinners and occasions *should* continue for the rest of your lives. Surprising each other with unexpected activities and plans is enormously important. So is an occasional weekend away at just the right time to just the right place!

Find ways to keep your relationship interesting, even fascinating, because you are committed to continually be uplifting, encouraging and inspiring to your mate—and because your happiness is directly intertwined with your spouse.

### **Practicing Forgiveness**

The subject of fidelity introduces the reality that some marriages are rocked by adultery. Many couples have to deal with the pain of a “cheating” spouse.

If there has been infidelity in your marriage, strive to move on. Ask God to help you forgive, if you are the victim—and to repent, if you are the offender. After all, repentance and forgiveness, in every aspect of human behavior, inside or outside marriage, is crucial to understand. Human beings are imperfect. Everyone makes mistakes, but some are far harder to overcome—and forgive—than others. Accept responsibility for either side of this coin, when it applies.

There will be numerous occasions when you will need to overlook what your mate has done. It means extra tolerance, at the least, and sometimes outright mercy and forgiveness when you may least feel like giving it.

Also recognize that every marriage has areas of friction and disagreement, not visible when couples were romancing each other. Initially, each party obvi-

ously kept the best foot forward, knowing the other might lose interest if the “real you” made an appearance. After marriage, the “real you” does appear!

A beautiful tapestry, viewed from afar, will not reveal the stains and tiny imperfections that become visible when examined at close range. The closer you get to the person you have married, the more visible the good and bad points will become. You will see the texture of their “tapestry” up close and personal. It is this second stage—of coming to *truly* know each other—that invariably tests the will of the couple to continue a lifelong commitment.

Remember, you married because your spouse was a beautiful tapestry!

### Planning a Family

One of the purposes of sexual relations is to produce children. God’s first command to husbands and wives, referenced before the Genesis 2 instruction, was “be fruitful, and multiply” (Gen. 1:28).

Many couples no longer want to have children. Also, one in six couples *cannot* have children, because one in every twelve married people is now infertile. It only takes one infertile partner to have a childless marriage.

But this is not what God intended. Your parents gave *you* the gift of life—and you are probably very glad they did. You have the same power—and it should be exercised! But do it wisely.

Plan to have children. Do not let careers get in the way. Determine when and how many is best for you. Consider your finances and prepare for them. Also, before they arrive, prepare yourselves to be good parents. The greatest gift you can give your children is to be a wise and understanding parent! Ask God for great wisdom in this area. In the same regard, never forget that setting an *example* of unified, loving, patient parents is your constant goal.

Of course, like sexual relations, childrearing requires its own book. (Read our book *Train Your Children God’s Way* to learn that there is far more to rearing happy, balanced and productive children than meets the eye.)

### The Truly Happy Marriage

God tells husbands: “Live joyfully with the wife whom you love all the days of [your] life” (Ecc. 9:9). For this to be possible, the wife has to be doing the same—and this should be the daily goal of every married couple. None of the principles in this booklet will bring true, complete happiness unless *both* mates are diligently applying them. Successful marriages are always the product of *two* people working *together* toward the same purpose in the same way with the same understanding.

If you have a wonderful husband or a wonderful wife, you are truly blessed—and much more unusual than you may think. But if you do not have a good husband or a good wife, then strive to grow as much as *you* possibly can, understanding that your mate may follow your example.

God says this to husbands blessed to have found a wonderful wife: “Whoso finds a wife finds a good thing, and obtains favor of the LORD” (Prov. 18:22).

A virtuous wife *is* wonderful—“a good thing”—and wise husbands-to-be will search for such a woman before getting married. Special favor from God is just one benefit that comes from marrying a woman of great character.

Wives, strive to be special in every way you possibly can. Husbands, strive to be worthy of such a wonderful woman. The result may be that you find that God has sent you one.

The couple that *works* at their marriage will find that their marriage WORKS!—and far better than they had ever dreamed! On your wedding day, you promised—you vowed!—before God to spend the rest of your life married to the same person. Stay focused on this commitment. Do not let it wane or blur in your mind. It was intended to be “for better or for worse.” It is easy for a couple to remain committed when times are “better,” but not so easy to remain so when they are going through a “worse” phase. A close relationship with God, based on a deep recognition that He knows how to produce all the best and most wonderful things in both marriage and life, has no substitute. No matter what difficulty your marriage is facing, bring God into it. He has all the true and lasting solutions.

Commitment is the bedrock foundation of every successful marriage. Remember, “When the going gets tough, the tough get going.” The rewards that flow from dedication to your wedding vows will bring joy beyond words.

Happiness depends far more on what YOU do than on what your mate or anyone else does. No matter the current state of your marriage, YOU can improve it. Take responsibility. You *can* grow—and it *can* get better. While this may take much work, not coming easily or overnight, the by-product is that much better times lie ahead for all those willing to follow God’s principles for building a truly happy marriage!

## **The following literature expands on topics discussed in this booklet:**

- Dating and Courtship – God’s Way
- Sex – Its Unknown Dimension
- Train Your Children God’s Way
- Bible Authority...Can It Be *Proven*?
- Does God Exist?
- Taking Charge of Your Finances
- The Purpose of Marriage – *Ever Obsolete*?
- Understanding Divorce and Remarriage

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YCB

### **The Restored Church of God**

1000 Ambassador Drive  
Wadsworth, OH 44281  
USA

P.O. Box 4064  
St. Catharines, ON L2R 7S3  
CANADA

Phone: (330) 334-2266

Fax: (330) 334-6513

E-mail: [info@rcg.org](mailto:info@rcg.org)

Web: [rcg.org](http://rcg.org)





