

GOD'S PRESCRIPTION FOR MARRIAGE

The disintegration of the home among non-Christians is alarming and very destructive. The disintegration of the home among Christians is a disgrace to God and His Word. In this lesson I hope to lay out some things that God says in His Word that you need to know in order to have a successful marriage. Every divorce is brought about by selfishness on the part of one or both of the spouses. I define selfishness as acting for the good of you at the expense of another. Anyone who is preoccupied with himself is not a good prospect as a marriage partner.

You may ask what credentials I have to write on such a subject. First of all I own a Bible and I do read it. Second, I came from a family that has had multiple marriages in every generation as far back as I know, until mine. That makes me an expert on what it is like for the children that are victimized by the "success" of the feminizing of the culture and the disintegration of Biblical marriage inside and outside of the church. I also have been married to the same wife for 45 years and plan to be till death do us part.

Now for God's prescription for a successful marriage. It is found in Ephesians 5: 22 – 33 and reads as follows. **22 Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord. 23 For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body. 24 But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands in everything. 25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her; 26 that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, 27 that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she should be holy and blameless. 28 So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself; 29 for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church. 30 because we are members of His body. 31 For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh. 32 This mystery is great; I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church. 33 Nevertheless**

let each individual among you also love his own wife even as himself; and let the wife see to it that she respect her husband.

Now I realize that husbands and wives have been beating each other over the head with these verses for centuries. Obviously they were not meant to be used in that way, so we will not use them in that way. The problem comes when husbands start pointing out the rules for the wife and the wives point out the parts written to the husbands. Here, we will read only our own mail.

TO THE HUSBANDS

CHOOSING A WIFE

The first rule is simple and without debate, you only marry another Christian. If you are a Christian, you have no business dating anyone who is not a Christian. You can't ask for God to bless you when you are living in outright rebellion against Him. His Word says: (II Cor. 6: 14 – 18) **14 Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship have light with darkness? 15 Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever? 16 Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; just as God has said, I will dwell with them and walk among them and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. 17 "Therefore, come out from their midst and be separate," says the Lord. "And do not touch what is unclean; and I will welcome you" 18 "And I will be a father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to Me," Says the Lord Almighty.**

Not all people who say that they are Christians actually are. Before you get serious about someone, make sure that you are both solid Christians. It is true that you need to have some physical attraction to the one you hope to marry but that is not enough. Make sure that she is a woman of good character. Pay very close attention to what others think of her. They may be more objective than you are. Do you like her close friends? Is she a faithful friend? Do you get along well with her family? Is her nature one of taking or giving? You will never be able to give enough to satisfy a taker. There should be absolutely no sex before marriage. When sex enters into a relationship, it takes over and you stop getting to know each other. Find out what she does when adversity comes; does she run to God or away from Him? Is she moody? You will weary of that in a

hurry if you marry her. Is she thankful by nature or does she take things for granted? If she is not a thankful person, you will never be able to satisfy her and she will never be contented with what she has. What kind of family does she come from? Are they strong Christians? She will probably raise your children the same way she was raised. Is that what you want? How does she handle money? Is she responsible? Has she been spoiled and always given her way? These are some of the things that you need to take the time and come to grips with before you think of marriage.

YOUR DUTIES AS A HUSBAND

Let us go back to the original prescription that we read in the beginning of this discussion and read the directions to the husbands. **V 23 "For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the savior of the body."** Many men love that verse. It should actually cause them to ask what that verse really means. Christ became the head of the church through His death and resurrection. In establishing the church, he didn't do what he wanted, but what God The Father wanted. **John 5:19 Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, unless it is something He sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, these things the Son does in like manner.** And what was it that the Father had Him do for the church? He gave up His life for her. **Matthew 26:39 b "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as Thou wilt."** You will need to make the hard decisions, not based on what is best for you but what is best for your wife and the family; and you will need to find the will of God for the family. Just as Christ died for the church, even so you must die to self for your wife and family. That is something to be in fear and trembling about because it is a great responsibility before God.

What kind of man should this husband be? In Titus 2 : 6 – 8 We read: **"Likewise urge the young men to be sensible; in all things show yourself to be an example of good deeds, with purity in doctrine, dignified, sound in speech which is beyond reproach, in order that the opponent may be put to shame, having nothing bad to say about us."** This is what your wife has a right to expect from you. With leadership comes great responsibility. Never forget that.

Now that we have established that the husband is to be the leader in the home, what kind of leadership style is he to use? The example, of course, is Christ. **Matthew 20: 27-28 and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave; just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.** Servant leadership is the only leadership recognized as New Testament leadership. Naturally, this is exactly the opposite of what the world thinks of as true leadership. **Matthew 20 : 25 – 28 But Jesus called them to Himself, and said, “You know that the rulers of the gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. It is not so among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave; just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and give His life a ransom for many.”** **Matthew 23;11-12 “but the greatest among you shall be your servant. And whoever exalts himself shall be humbled; and whoever humbles himself shall be exalted.”** The husband sets the tone in the home. That is what leaders do. If he is a servant, then the family will follow and be servants. If he is self-centered and demanding, the family will be that way too. The fact of the matter is that if you become a servant, you will get what you want from the rest of the servants in the home and everyone gets what he wants. Make it your goal to please your wife and you will both be better off. I am not saying that you need to be a weak person. The truth is that it takes much more leadership to be a servant leader than a tyrant. You don't just give your wife and children everything at the expense of good sound principles. You don't run up debts to satisfy your family. You use good sound financial planning and fiscal discipline. You are just and fair in your dealings with those in your home and those outside of your home. Integrity will be your hallmark. The point is that you should please your wife if possible. It doesn't take much some times. I used to send flowers to my wife from time to time when I was teaching and she worked at a nursing home. I always sent them when there was nothing to celebrate. I sent them just because I wanted to, and I always put that on the card. It drove the other women crazy that my wife got flowers just because I loved her and they knew that their husband would never do that. It made her the envy of the whole place and made her feel special. If you will look

for things to make your wife feel special, it will come back to you. If your goal is to please your wife, you are in control and you can always be successful at it. If you look for ways to get your wife to please you, you will always be in a struggle because you don't have that control and you will probably not be successful. Servant leadership is leadership by example. It is positive leadership; (Follow me) Leadership by coercion is negative leadership; (do this, or else) it is the difference between herding sheep, and herding cattle. Sheep follow their shepherd out of confidence that he will lead them where they can find pasture. It is a positive thing, the shepherd goes before the sheep and the sheep follow, and the shepherd breaths fresh air and his shoes are clean. You don't lead cattle, you must drive them. You go behind them and holler at them and make sure that they don't go in the wrong direction. It is a negative thing. Don't go there, don't go here. And by cutting off all of the wrong directions that a cow might choose to go you get them to go where you wish. Cattle herders breathe a lot of dust and their shoes get very messy. When you lead your family as a servant, you get cooperation. When you try to drive your family, you may get conformity, but not cooperation. You can choose to either lead them or drive them. I like fresh air and clean shoes.

DUTIES OF A FATHER

A father must provide for his family. If he doesn't, he is worse than a heathen. That is what the Bible says, **I Tim. 5:8 "But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith, and is worse than an unbeliever."** Before you get married, you need to have a way to provide for your family. You should get whatever training you need to get employment so that you can support your family. There are, of course, times when it is hard to get a job. In those times you need to do whatever you can to earn some money to support your family. It is also prudent to save some money for unseen expenses. You must be responsible.

Another duty of a father is to protect his family. There are a never-ending number of things and circumstances that will arise that you need to protect your family from. The most important thing that you can do to protect your children is to love their mother. God commands you to love your wife. You either love your wife or you

are in open rebellion against God. "But", you may say, "I have fallen out of love with her." I have fallen off a roof, out of a boat, into the water, and off a bicycle. But I can't fall out of love. You don't fall into and out of love. Love is a decision. If it weren't, God wouldn't command it because you wouldn't be capable of following the instruction. Love is not a feeling!! No one can control his feelings. He can only control his decisions. Therefore, if you are controlled by your feelings you, are by definition, out of control. In **I Corinthians 13: 4 – 7** we read **Love is patient, love is kind, and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek it's own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.** By my count, there are 15 decisions that result in love. These are decisions that you can decide to do. Don't tell me, or God, that you can't love your wife. You can choose to act in this way. In order to do your duty to protect your family, you need to stay married to the mother of your children. It is a disgrace that people, who call themselves Christians, are getting divorced at the same rate as the non-Christians. Divorce and the destruction of the children's lives are inextricably connected.

In a recent study, it was found that
63% of all Youth suicides are from fatherless homes.
90% of all homeless and runaway children are from fatherless homes
85% of all children with behavioral problems are from fatherless homes
80% of all anger-motivated rapists are from fatherless homes
71% of high school dropouts are from fatherless homes
70% of juveniles in state institutions are from fatherless homes
85% of all youths in prisons are from fatherless homes
40% of all children in America are from fatherless homes

Children from fatherless homes are:

4.6 times more likely to commit suicide
6.6 times more likely to become teenage mothers
24.3 times more likely to run away
15.3 times more likely to have behavior disorders
6.3 times more likely to be in state institutions

10.8 times more likely to commit rape
6.6 times more likely to drop out of school
15.3 times more likely to end up in prison as teenagers.
33 times more likely to be seriously abused needing medical attention
73 times more likely to be killed

In the US 15% of white and 50% of black girls enter puberty by age 8. The greatest predictor for early onset of puberty among young girls is the lack of a loving father in the home. This is especially true where the mother is dating. Early puberty in girls results in more breast cancer in later life, Unhealthy weight gain, more teen pregnancy, Depression, anxiety, alcoholism and sexual promiscuity.

This is how a loving, servant father, protects his family. He protects in so many ways! And he, and his family, will reap benefits that they will never fully know.

The last two verses of the Old Testament haunt me. **Malachi 4 : 5 – 6 "Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord. And he will restore the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the land with a curse."** I am afraid that our land is under that curse today and the people who call themselves by that Great Name are greatly to be blamed.

TO THE WIVES

CHOOSING A HUSBAND

The first rule is simple and without debate, you only marry another Christian. If you are a Christian, you have no business dating anyone who is not a Christian. You can't ask for God to bless you when you are living in outright rebellion against Him. His Word says: (II Cor. 6: 14 – 18) **14 Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship have light with darkness? 15 Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever? 16 Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temples of the living God; just as God has said, I will dwell with them and walk among them and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. 17 "Therefore, come out from their midst and be separate," says the Lord. "And do not touch what is unclean; and I will welcome you" 18**

“And I will be a father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to Me,” Says the Lord Almighty.

Not all people who say that they are Christians actually are. Before you get serious about someone, make sure that you are both solid Christians. It is true that you need to have some physical attraction to the one you hope to marry but that is not enough. Make sure that he is a man of good character. What kind of man should this husband be? In Titus 2 : 6 – 8 We read: **“Likewise urge the young men to be sensible; in all things show yourself to be an example of good deeds, with purity in doctrine, dignified, sound in speech which is beyond reproach, in order that the opponent may be put to shame, having nothing bad to say about us.”** This is what you as a wife have a right to expect from the man who will be your husband so make sure he measures up before you marry him. You will never be happy that you chose a loser and you will never be sorry that you chose a winner. Take time to do it right. With leadership comes great responsibility. Pay very close attention to what others think of him. They may be more objective than you are. Do you like his close friends? Is he a faithful friend? Do you get along well with his family? Is his nature one of taking or giving? You will never be able to give enough to satisfy a taker. There should be absolutely no sex before marriage. When sex enters into a relationship, it takes over and you stop getting to know each other. You, as the woman, are the one to set the boundaries when it comes to sex. Set them early, set them high and set them firmly. You are the one to set these boundaries because you have the most to lose from this activity outside of marriage. If he continues to put pressure on you to have sex after you have laid down the guidelines, you have the wrong prospect for marriage because he doesn't care about your wishes. He is primarily interested in satisfying himself and your needs and wishes come in below that. Dump him! Find out what he does when adversity comes; does he run to God or away from Him? Is he moody? You will weary of that in a hurry if you marry him. Is he thankful by nature or does he take things for granted? If he is not a thankful person, you will never be able to satisfy him and he will never be contented with what he has. What kind of family does he come from? Are they strong Christians? He will probably raise your children the same way he was raised and he will probably treat

you the way his father treats his mother. Is that what you want? How does he handle money? Is he responsible? Has he been spoiled and always given his way? A fixer-upper is never a good candidate for a husband. You don't want a project, you want a husband. Don't settle for damaged goods. These are some of the things that you need to take the time to come to grips with before you think of marriage.

DUTIES OF A WIFE

Let us go back to the prescription that we read at the beginning concerning the duties of the wife.

Ephesians 5 : 22 + 24 22 Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord. V 24 But as the church is subject to Christ, so also wives ought to be to their husbands in everything.

In the Amplified Bible, verse 22 reads, "Wives, be subject -- be submissive and adapt yourselves -- to your own husbands as [a service] to the Lord.

So what God has in mind here is a servant leader and a servant follower. If you marry the former, you will have no trouble being the latter. Husbands are not called to be despots and wives are not called to be doormats. The responsibility falls most heavily on the man and thus he has the primary authority. The wife is the civilizing influence in the home. She is the nurturer and the one who brings the blessing of her presence into the home. We find some of the traits that a wife should have in Titus 2 : 4 – 5 where it says young wives should be taught to, **"love their husbands, to love their children, to be sensible, pure, workers at home, kind, being subject to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be dishonored."**

DUTIES OF A MOTHER

If the Lord blesses you with children, you will find yourself with the most difficult and blessed job that has ever been given to anyone. It is the mother's job to tend to the children. If children are shuffled off to day care each morning you will have lost the most valuable blessing that you could ever have and the children will likewise be great losers in life. To start with, they will be sicker. You

cannot put small children together in large numbers without spreading disease. The children will grow up with someone else's values and some day you will wonder why he doesn't have your values. Everyone loses. You lose, the children lose, society loses, and God loses.

With all of the attention that is required by the children, don't forget to make time for each other. It is best for them and it is best for you. You need time for yourself. You need time to be alone with your husband. The children will grow up and you will be just a couple again. Make sure that you are still in love when that happens. Remember that there is a ditch on both sides of a road. You can focus so much on your responsibility to your children that you may run into the ditch of neglect of your marriage. Be aware of the stress that you are under and get some help with the children in order to have some time to recharge and come back fresh. You can't take care of your family if you don't take care of yourself. A good husband will help you to do that. Choose well!!!

SUMMING UP

If you take everything that I have said in this article as absolutes, you will probably die as a bachelor, or an old maid. There is no one who fits every part. The point is that you need to be very careful when you choose a partner. My wife broke many of the rules that I have set down here when she decided to marry me. I was a new Christian and came from a very confusing family. With families the way they are now, it is going to be hard to find a mate that comes from good sound Christian family. Find out first if he or she recognizes that his family is not a model to follow. Talk long and much about what each of you envision as your roles in a marriage and make sure that each has the temperament, the skill, the income, the commitment, the education to carry them out. Don't talk of building a big house and driving a new car if he works at the car wash and is a high school dropout with no ambition. Take the time to know him very well. I am a firm believer in II Corinthians 5: 17 "**Therefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.**" The thing is to make sure that he is "in Christ" and that the old things have indeed passed away before you decide to commit to this man.

I talked about roles of both husband and wife, but these are loose boundaries. If the man is a poor manager of money and his wife is good at it, he needs to turn the management of the finances over to her. Each one of you will have weaknesses and strengths. It makes no sense for someone to do a job in the family if he, or she, is not good at it and the partner is. In the end you have to make this work. Find out before you get married which one has which strengths and weaknesses. Make sure that you don't have all of the strengths and your partner, all of the weaknesses. You will then be married to a child that you will have to take care of. Use your head. Talk much about these things before you get married. Do your homework.

MARRIED TO THE WRONG ONE?

You may say, "What if I am married to the wrong person"? The first thing that you need to do is have a good talk with the one who chose your spouse for you. Ask what that person saw in him or her. You actually do have the power to change the way people treat you. At least to a certain extent. Let me tell you about my friend.

He came to me one day and said; "Paul, I don't know what has happened to the relationship between my daughter and me. We seem to be at each other all the time. When we try to talk, it always ends up with us sniping at each other and I don't want it to be that way and I don't think she does either. What can I do?" I asked him if he was willing to try something to fix it. He said that he was. I asked him to get a small spiral notebook or something that he could keep some notes on and devote it exclusively to this project. I then told him to think of one thing about his daughter that was positive and that he could thank God for and write it down. The next day he was to add one more thing to his list and then thank God for both of those things. He was to continue to do that for at least 30 days, adding one thing each day. I saw him again several months later and asked if he had done what we had talked about and he said that he had. That really surprised me. I am used to people asking for advice and then quickly disregarding it. He said that his relationship with his daughter was never better. They were having a lot of fun doing things together. What caused this? When relationships start to deteriorate, we begin to see more of the negative things and fewer

of the positive things about that person. It doesn't happen over night. When we are forced to start focusing on the positive, the negative begins to loose its grip and things start improving. Another part of this is that we stop focusing on how things affect us and start considering the other person. As we read in Philippians 4:8, **"Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, let your mind dwell on these things."** This brings us back to the notion of being a servant. A true servant serves another and disregards his own welfare. A servant has no rights and a good servant wants it that way. Where do fights come from? Is it not in the defense of one's own turf?

My mother and father were born again later in life after making a mess of their own lives and the family. By the time they came to Christ, they had each been married three times and divorced twice. Each had one spouse die. They were both single when they came to Christ having been divorced from each other for eight years. My dad came to Christ first. The pastor of the church was a man of great faith and believed that God would do great things in answer to believing prayer. He asked me one day if I thought my mom and dad could ever get back together again. I couldn't believe that he would ask such a ridiculous question. Of course not!! My mother wasn't a believer and there was no way this could happen. He said that they would pray. I looked him in the eye and said, "You can pray if you want to, but I will not waste my time." And I didn't. But he did. Within a few months, I saw the day come that in one night my mother came to Christ, God gave her back her love for my dad and his love for her and in the morning we were planning the wedding. My wife and I stood up for them at their wedding. They remained married till his death. God still answers prayer!

There is still much hope. I find that people begin to get negative about their spouse when they feel powerless or put upon. Sit down with your spouse and study this lesson together. Let your guard down. Be honest with each other and ask to be held accountable. Not criticized, but held accountable in a supportive way. Help each other become all that they can be so that your marriage can be all that you ever wanted it to be. You can each have the

spouse that you always wanted without getting divorced. When you turn to the roll described at the beginning of this article, and assume the roll that God has given you. You will be affected and you will affect your spouse as well. Will it happen right away? Probably not. You should consider how long it took to create this mess and give it that much time to be corrected.

If you are not yet married and are planning to be, study this lesson together and see if you each find yourself in agreement with the word of God and the things in this lesson. It can be a beginning for a more open and helpful discussion between you.

I hope that this has been helpful for you.

Paul Ziegler