

God's Order for Marriage and Families

For family life our basic instruction book is the Bible and we need to know what it says. We either choose the passing view of the world on marriage or we choose the permanent and perfect instructions from God as we find in the Bible.

In the Beginning.

In Genesis, we read how God put man and woman together so that they could reproduce themselves by means of family. God Himself loves to reproduce Himself (He made Adam in His own image) and he wanted men and women to do the same. This is what The Lord said based in Genesis 2:22-25:-

Matt 19:4-6

"Haven't you read," he replied, "that at the beginning the Creator '**made them male and female**', and said, '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.**" (NIV)

From the above we learn these two things:-

1 God Created Male and female.

We are made in the image of God and, as mentioned above, are able to reproduce ourselves. Also it illustrates the relationship of Christ and His Bride and the family is also the basis of a normal healthy society.

Male and female are both equal but are dependent on each other. Independence or over-dependence on each other (where one heavily leans on the other and expects more than God intended the other to provide) destroy the balance. God has given to a woman a beautiful capacity to meet a man's need of love (though the man should be the initiator of love in marriage just as Christ *first* loved us I Jn 4:19 - We love him, because he first loved us.) Within that male/female marriage relationship, the success of the marriage will be dependent on the extent to which those vows to love each other and be faithful are lived out in the relationship. We look at the issue of love below It will also be dependent on a proper understanding of what marriage means.

There is a view that when people get married, the wife simply shares with her husband what belongs to her and vice versa. In other words, I have a car and I'm prepared to share it with you rather than I have a car and now it's yours as well. I have money and I'll share it with you instead of I have money and now that's yours too. I'll share what's mine if you'll share what's yours.

The marriage covenant as God sees it is different. It's each giving the other 100% of themselves, their bodies, their belongings, their all. There is a giving and receiving of each other in a life long unity of body, mind and spirit.

Just as the Lord said, I and the Father are one (John 10:30), so the husband and wife are to be one in the way they live together, work together, love together and bring up their children together.

2 Marriage is for Life.

At marriage, vows are made and are to be kept. They are made before witnesses such as family and friends and each promises to love and honour the other and to be faithful for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health till death do us part. The vows are permanent, must not be forgotten and God holds us to them seriously - and God hates divorce.

Mal 2:16

"I hate divorce," says the LORD God of Israel, "and I hate a man's covering himself with violence as well as with his garment," says the LORD Almighty. So guard yourself in your spirit, and do not break faith. (NIV)

In any marriage, neither partner should embark on a course of behaviour so unacceptable that the other partner is led to consider divorce as an option.

Marriage Thrives on Love

We are created with a deep need to be loved for ourselves and not for who we are or what we can achieve – and that love needs to be unchanging and there for us always. The fact is, only God can love like that. Christians in particular should be ones who are conscious of receiving God’s divine love as His love has drawn us and caused us to put our trust in Him. Unless a person’s need for that kind of love is rooted in God, the person will go looking for it in people who can’t provide it. It is our duty to love God with all our hearts because it is only when we love God and are experiencing a divine exchange of love between us that we can love others with the kind of love God intended. Scripture tells husbands to love their wives. It is a love of the will, a love by choice – volitional love. There is another kind of love too. Emotional love. It is the kind of love which can move us into feeling a particular way. So, a husband can be moved to deep affection and devotion at the sight of his wife when she is looking particularly beautiful. However when his wife is annoyed with him for some reason, his emotions can easily make him feel quite differently towards her! Therefore, emotional love alone between husband and wife is not enough. Husbands and wives must love each other with their wills as well as their emotions. Volitional love – choosing to love your wife/husband in 1 Corinthians 13 style come what may - will still remain intact even when emotional love is frayed at the edges. Marriages will thrive on it so husbands and wives should embark on it and continue in it.

The Family Under Attack

1 From Within

Marriages are in the firing line, particularly Christian marriages where there are children. That’s because Christian marriages are the best training ground for children to learn about God and His ways. The family should be a household of faith. The future strength of the Christian church will depend greatly on the way parents live out their lives as Christians in the home. The children will initially take their example of how to live the Christian life from parents who profess to be Christians. Your children are likely to mirror the example you set them. Therefore, the Christian family is under attack initially, and surprisingly, from parents who do not act out their roles in their homes as people who love and honour the Lord, who do not show that they love and honour each other and who do not live pure and holy lives in front of their children. Parents should set their children an example which they will want to adopt as they grow up and which will lead them into a closer walk with God.

Prov 22:6 6 Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it. (NIV)

2 From the Media

The whole family is under attack through the eye-gate via TV, videos and so on. So much of the media is designed to fill the mind with bad ideas. People will copy what they see. The soap-opera mentality of each wanting his/her own way, major rows over minor issues, fighting, revenge, unfaithfulness, sex before marriage unforgiveness and so on are all designed to destroy what should be a godly family marriage. We have to decide just how much time we are prepared to sit and watch such stuff.

3 From Materialism

We have to take care over this one to ensure that our lives do not become a never ending quest to acquire more and more money to buy more and more “things”– often things we don’t even need and which can sometimes bring more problems than joys. The quest for acquiring more and more stuff has led to major debt problems in the lives of so many and causes rows, anxiety, depression, divorce and misery for the families concerned. Don’t get caught up with that trend. Buy what you need and live within your means. Don’t despise “things” as they are there for us to enjoy and to thank God for but, take care, because “things” and the acquisition of things want to dominate your lives, spoil your family and ruin your marriage. It doesn’t say in the Bible that you cannot *have* both God and money. However, it does say that can’t *serve* God and money. Money is a good servant but not a good master.

Matt 6:24 "No-one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money. (NIV)