

The Divine Pattern for Marriage, Part 5 *The Husband's Priorities*

Introduction

- ***The Seven Ages of the Married Cold***

Several years ago, the *Saturday Evening Post* published an article entitled "The Seven Ages of the Married Cold." It revealed the reaction of a husband to his wife's colds during their first seven years of marriage. It went something like this:

The first year. "Sugar dumpling, I'm really worried about my baby girl. You've got a bad snuffle, and there's no telling about these things with all this strep throat going around. I'm putting you in the hospital this afternoon for a general checkup and a good rest. I know the food's lousy, but I'll be bringing your meals in from Rossini's. I've already got it all arranged with the floor superintendent."

The second year. "Listen, darling, I don't like the sound of that cough. I called Doc Miller and asked him to rush over here. Now you go to bed like a good girl, please? Just for papa."

The third year. "Maybe you'd better lie down, honey; nothing like a little rest when you'd feel lousy. I'll bring you something to eat. Have you got any canned soup?"

The fourth year. "Now look, dear, be sensible. After you've fed the kids, washed the dishes, and finished the floor, you'd better lie down."

The fifth year. "Why don't you take a couple of aspirin?"

The sixth year. "I wish you'd just gargle or something, instead of sitting around all evening barking like a seal!"

The seventh year. "For Pete's sake, stop sneezing! Are you trying to give me pneumonia?"

The decline of marriage as seen through the common cold. A funny look at a not-so-funny reality.

Psychologist Carl Rogers in his book *Becoming Partners: Marriage and Its Alternatives*, said, "To me it seems that we are living in an important and uncertain age, the institution of marriage is most assuredly in an uncertain state. If 50 to 75 percent of Ford or General Motors' cars completely fell apart within the early part of their lifetimes as automobiles, drastic steps would be taken. We have no such well organized way of dealing with our social institutions, so people are groping, more or less blindly, to find alternatives to marriage (which

is certainly less than 50 percent successful). Living together without marriage, living in communes, extensive child care centers, serial monogamy (with one divorce after another), the women's liberation movement to establish the woman as a person in her own right, new divorce laws which do away with the concept of guilt---these are all groping toward some new form of man-woman relationship for the future. It would take a bolder man than I to protect what will emerge?" [New York: Delacorte, 1972], p. 11.

Carl Rogers admits that in trying those alternatives to marriage people are "groping" for a new definition of man-woman relationships. But we don't need to grope; all we need to do is to go back to the Creator to find out how these relationships ought to work. After all, God made us --- He must know.

A. The Decadence of the Last Days

1. Its Certainty

2 Timothy 3:1 says, *"This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come."* Then verse 13, which is a summary of those perilous times, says, *"Evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived."* In other words, it's going to get worse---not better.

2. Its characteristics

a. Self-love

Verse 2 says, *"Men shall be lovers of their own selves."* The first characteristic of the last days noted here is that there will be an overwhelming sense of self-centeredness, selfishness, self-absorption, self-indulgence, and self-satisfaction. People will be looking at what they can get. There will be a time in the last days when men will become more and more in love with themselves.

b. Rebellion in the family

Another characteristic of the last days is mentioned at the end of verse 2: disobedience to parents. Children will lose their sense of respect and lack of proper perspective of authority. There will be rebellion in the family, and no obedience will be shown to parents. We're seeing this today. Juvenile crime is increasing at a rate beyond comprehension. Disobedience to parents is part of the problem, but with day-care centers, separations of families, and so forth, I'm not sure that children even comprehend, in many cases, what a parent is and what their role is supposed to be.

c. Lack of normal familial love

Another interesting characteristic of the last days is in verse 3: *"Without natural affection."* This phrase in the Greek text, *αστοργοι*, comes from *στοργη*, which means "familial affection." The *α*, when put in front of a word means "without." Literally, then *αστοργοι* means "without familial affection."

d. Attacks directed against the home

Verse 6 says, *"For of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with various lusts."* The home is going to

become fair game for every con man and sexual pervert. It's all going to come crashing down on the home, God's basic unit of human society

B. The Difficulty of Marriage

In our last lesson we saw that marriage is difficult because of the curse of God, the corruption of Satan, and the confusion of society. Now, add to those the characteristics of the last days as seen in 2 Timothy 3, and it becomes apparent that there's little hope for marriage---at least on human terms. But there is a way we can have relationships that are designed and fulfilled the way God intended them, which brings us back to Ephesians 5.

Review

I. The Duty of the Wife (vv. 22-24)

Lesson

II. The Duty of the Husband (vv. 24-33)

Many times I've heard people teach this passage and say, "The wives are to submit, and the husbands are to rule." But this passage doesn't say that. It says wives are to be submitting, and husbands are to be loving. You can't forget the mutuality that is present there. Yes, the husband has the leadership, and he is the stronger vessel, but that doesn't mean he is to rule the wife and lord it over her. That is what the curse does---and we're trying to get marriage back to a co-regency, as God intended it before the Fall. Verse 25 says, "*Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it.*" Dying for someone is the most magnanimous act of submission possible. Husbands are to be submitting to their wives as well. There is beautiful mutuality (cf. 1 Cor. 7:4, 33-34). The husband is to love his wife; that is his act of submission.

A. The Manner of Love (vv. 25-31)

"Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church." The standard is infinitely high. However, the text isn't talking about the full capacity of divine love; it's talking about the factors involved in the kind of love Christ manifested. Obviously we cannot match God's love in quantity, or even in quality, but we can love in *kind*. We may not possess the ocean, but we can have a little of it in our bucket.

1. Sacrificial love (v. 25)

"As Christ also loved the church, and gave himself [lit. "gave up"] for it"

a. Its example

When Jesus came into the world, He loved the church. In fact, He loved the church before the foundation of the world in eternity past. And He loved us enough to leave heaven, come to earth, take on a human form, be spit on and mocked, crowned with a crown of thorns, nailed to a cross, abused, and have a spear thrust into His side. He loved the church enough to die. That's sacrificial love. And it is sacrificial love that is to mark the love of a husband for his wife. When Christ gave up His prerogative to be equal with God and chose to come to earth in the form of a servant, He was acting in sacrificial love.

b. Its essence

1) Properly characterized

Sacrificial love has nothing to do with whether it's deserved or not. There wasn't a soul in the globe that deserved what Christ did for them. When our names were written in the Lamb's Book of Life before the foundation of the world, when God by His sovereign love placed us in the Body of Christ, and when we were chosen to be His children, it was not because we were deserving. Sacrificial love is undeserved. God is not rescuing people who deserve rescue; He is saving those who don't deserve it because it's His nature to love. An inferior loves gives only to those who earn the right to receive it. But God's love is given to those who don't have the right to earn it.

2) Predominantly corrupted

The world loves with an object-oriented love. So if the object is desirable, the world says, "I love you." When people pick a partner, they look around and say, "There's a nice one. I'll love that one," or "Forget that one." Or they go through a group of people and say, "I don't care for those people; they aren't worthy of my love. They don't live up to my expectation. They don't fit into my little group. But those people---oh, I love them." Everything depends upon the form of an object or its personality. We have an object-oriented attraction.

God's love is different. God doesn't expect the object to be worthy; it's His nature to love. That's the difference. John 3:16 says, "*For God so **loved** the world*" (emphasis added). God was going to love anything, and it was a matter of being attractive, it wouldn't have been the world. The world hated God, but God loved the world. It's not the object that defines God's love; it is His nature to love.

c. Its exhortation

When Paul says in Ephesians 5:25, "*Husbands, love your wives,*" he's not saying "love her because she deserves it"; he's saying "love her even if she doesn't deserve it. Love her enough to die for her, whether she's worth dying for or not." We are commanded to love our wives. It isn't an issue of attraction; it's an issue of a binding commandment from God. However, I believe you will become greatly attracted to what you choose to love.

Sacrificial love is undeserved, yet it goes to the furthest extremity, as exemplified in Christ. It says, "You don't deserve anything, but I'll give you everything. You don't deserve anything, but I'll die for you. You don't even deserve My best, but I'll give you My life." And Paul is saying that we are to say to our wives, "You may not deserve all those things, you may be a sinner, and you may not be all that you could be, but that is never the issue. I love you and commit myself to you, even if you are the least deserving. And I will give you everything I have---even to the point of dying for you."

• ***Is Love an Emotion?***

Love, as God defines it, is not an emotion. The world says, “when the feeling stops, the love is over.” That kind of love creates serial monogamy; it’s not the love of the Bible. The love of the Bible is not a feeling; it is an act of selfless sacrifice. Anyone with a need is worthy of it.

Jesus washed the disciples’ feet (John 13). Why? Because they deserved it? No; they were arguing about who would be the greatest in the kingdom. They were on an ego trip; they were selfish, self-centered, self-indulgent, and absolutely insensitive to the fact that Jesus was going to the cross. And in their self-indulgence they refused to wash each other’s feet. Finally, Jesus stepped down and washed their feet. And when He was done He said to them, “*A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you*” (v. 34). How had He loved them? Certainly not feeling emotional. If anything, He probably felt pain because of their selfishness and sorrow because of their indifference. But in His sorrow and pain, He washed their feet. Love doesn’t act out what it feels; it does what is right. Where there is need, love acts. And in a

marriage, it isn’t a matter of whether your partner deserves your love; it’s a matter of sharing love because it is sharing.

John 3:16 doesn’t say, “For God so loved the world that He felt emotional about it.” God didn’t look at this world and say, “I just can’t resist them; I’ve got to get them in heaven. They’re terrific.” There wasn’t one thing in us that was deserving. We were enemies; we hated God; we were sinful and vile, but God loved us anyway. And He loved us so much, he gave Himself.

In Acts 20:28 Paul says, “*The church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.*” We were so rotten, He had to die to claim us. We were so far gone. He had to give His life to rescue us. And Paul basically says in Ephesians 5:25, “That’s the way I want you to love your wives.” It’s not emotion. Now, you commit yourself to love you may become emotional, but you must first realize that love is always a verb. Love always acts, meets needs, does whatever has to be done, and reaches out.

Husbands, you will never know how to love until you’ve sacrificed yourself, crucified yourself, and died to yourself. Paul says that love “*seeketh not its own*” (1 Cor. 13:5). As long as you’re looking for what you can get out of marriage, you will never know what it is to love your wife as Christ loved the church.

Ask yourself: When is the last time I made a sacrifice for my wife? When is the last time I sacrificed my self for my wife? When is the last time I came close to actually being willing to die for my wife? When is the last time, when we both wanted to do different things, that I said, “Honey, I think what you wanted to do is what we ought to do?” When is the last time I set aside my own carefully laid out plans to do what my wife suddenly decided she wanted to do? The whole heart of the matter is dying to self.

- ***Is he or Isn't He?***

There are many men who want to be spiritual leaders. They want to be preachers, teachers, elders, or deacons---and they want to be pious. But if you want to know whether a man is genuine, check out his home. Find out the last time he made a sacrifice for his wife. Find out whether he would die for her. Find out whether he would give up everything he has to meet her needs. If you do that, you'll find out if he is genuine. If true spiritual life isn't a reality in the home, then it's a façade on the outside. You may be playing giant, but if you're sacrificially giving up yourself for the needs of your wife, you've missed the point. Love meets needs; worthiness isn't an issue.

Husbands, we need to die to self. Our world tells us" "Be the macho man. Be the big shot. Don't let anyone step into your territory. Fight back; you deserve more. Build up your identity. Be somebody. Grab all the gusto. Live for the moment." But the Bible says, "Crucify yourself"---the opposite of what the world says. Somewhere along the line, if you're going to love your wife as God says you should and if you're going to love her as Christ (who was willing to die) loved the church, then you're going to have to make a sacrifice for her.

2. Purifying love (vv. 26-27)

"That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish."

- a. The Lord's purification of His church

Christ loved the church. He wanted to cleanse it and purify it. This teaches us a basic truth: when you love someone, his purity is your goal. No one loves something and then wants to defile it. Christ loved His church, so He wanted to purify His people.

- 1) Positional cleansing

When you are saved, the Lord Jesus Christ cleanses every sin you committed and will commit. The Bible says that Christ has *"forgiven you all trespasses"* (Col. 2:13). The moment you opened your heart and invited Christ in, He cleansed you so absolutely that *"though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool"* (Isa. 1:18). He has removed your sin *"as far as the east is from the west"* (Psa. 103:12), and then cast them *"into the depths of the sea"* (Mic. 7:19). He says, *"I will remember their sin no more"* (Jer. 31:34). When you were saved. He made you absolutely pure so that you can enter into the presence of God covered in His absolute righteousness: *"For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him"* (2 Cor. 5:21). When you were saved, you were absolutely purified. Past, present, and future, every sin was done away with, and forever you'll be pure.

- 2) Daily cleansing

In John 13:10 Jesus essentially says to Peter, “He that is bathed doesn’t need to take another bath. [Gk., λουο]; you just need your feet washed [Gk., νιπτο].” In the Orient, a man would get up in the morning and bathe himself. Then, as he went through the day and his feet got dirty, he would wash them as they needed it. The idea is that when you came to Christ, you were totally cleansed, positionally, before God. But every day you walk through the world and get your feet dusty; so Jesus keeps washing your feet. There is, then, the need for both a total positional cleansing and a continuous daily cleansing. When you were saved, all your sins were washed away; yet 1 John 1:9 says he keeps on cleansing us from all sin. You were bathed once, and you’re continuously kept pure.

b. The husband’s purification of his wife

Did you know that marrying someone purifies her by taking her out of the world and apart from the past? Whatever relationships she may have had, or whatever indulgences she may have had, or whatever other things she may have done, marriage sets her apart and purifies her. And not only in the act of marriage do you purify that person, but every day you live. If you really love your wife, you’ll seek that which keeps her feet clean from the dust of the world. If you love your wife, you will do everything in your power to maintain her holiness, her virtue, her righteousness, and her purity every day you live. You’ll never put her in a compromising situation where she would become angered, because that’s a sin. You would never induce an argument out of her, because that’s a sin. You would do nothing to defile her. You would never let her see anything, expose her to anything, or let her indulge in anything that would bring any impurity into her life. Love always seeks to purify.

Here’s some advice for women who aren’t married. If a man comes along and tells you he loves you and then tries to take away your virtue, that is not love. Don’t ever believe that definition of love. Love lifts up purifies, exalts, honors, makes holy, sanctifies.

Husband, if you love your wife, seek to lift her up, draw her to God, pour virtue into her life, and make her, in every possible way, like Christ. Husband, that’s your spiritual responsibility---you’re the purifier.

Look again at verse 26: Christ sanctifies and cleanses the church “*with washing of water by the word.*” It is the Word of God that keeps us pure (cf, John 15:3). It was God’s Word that redeemed us, and it is God’s Word that keeps us clean. Men, you have the responsibility in your home to apply to your wife every purifying influence that will make her holy. Do everything you can to ensure her purity.

Further, in verse 27, Paul says that the Lord wants to present Himself “*a glorious church [Gk., ενδοξον, “an intense splendor”], not having spot [Gk., σπιλον, “stain”], or wrinkle [Gk., ρυτιδα, “flaw”], or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.*” Men, that is how we are to deal with our wives. Don’t ever do anything in your life that will lead your wife into any illicit thought or relationship. Don’t ever do anything that would cause her to look to someone else

for fulfillment. Fulfill your love to her so she is purified, sanctified, and lifted up to God---that's your responsibility.

3. Caring love (vv. 28-30)

- a. *“So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself.”* (v. 28)

Men, we spend a lot of time on our bodies by jogging, exercising, eating the right foods, and wearing nice clothes. After all, a Christian's body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. We certainly don't want to mar it, so we take good care of it. What Paul is saying here is this: “Look, you ought to love your wife as you love your own body.”

Again, notice that love is not an emotion. When your body has needs, you meet them. Your wife also has needs, and you're to meet them too. And even though love is not an emotion, I believe that emotion can follow the meeting of a need. As you meet the needs of your wife, it's going to change your emotional response.

- b. *“For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church”* (v. 29).

Does the Lord care for the church? Does He take care of everything we need? The Bible doesn't say, “My God shall supply most of your needs... if you don't get too picky or make too many demands.” Philippians 4:19 says, *“But my God shall supply **all** your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus”* (emphasis added). If you need love, or joy, or peace, or strength, or wisdom, or anything else, He will give it to you. You will never do without what you need to fulfill His will.

Men, God is saying that we are to give our wives every single thing they need. Now, maybe she needs to understand the difference between needs and wants. If so, help her to do that. But, what she needs, you must supply. Don't forget that. The man is the provider, the protector, and the preserver. He is the one who grants the resources. We are to care for our wives as we care for our own bodies---as Christ cares for the church. Something is wrong if you look at your wife as a cook, baby-sitter, clothes washer, and sex partner---and nothing more. She is a God-given treasure to be cared for, cherished, and nourished.

1) *“Nourisheth”*

This word in verse 29 is a fantastic word. It is the Greek word *εκτρέφο*, which means “to nourish” or “to feed.” Primarily, it's used in reference to nurturing or raising children. It simply means “to mature.” Men, we're called to nurture our wives, to bring them to maturity and provide for their wives needs. Also, because *εκτρέφο* literally means “to feed,” I believe this reiterates the principle that the man is to be the breadwinner, the provider.

What did you provide for your salvation? Nothing. What resources do you provide to live the Christian life? Nothing. As Christ provides for the church, so a husband should provide for his wife. We're to nourish, feed, nurture, bring up, and mature our wives. We are to be their preservers, their saviors, and their protectors.

2) *"Cherisheth"*

This word literally means "to soften or warm with body heat." It is used to describe a bird sitting on her nest (cf. Deut. 22:6). Husbands are to literally provide a secure, warm, soft place as a provision for wives. Husbands are to provide the security. Don't shove your wife out into the cold, hard, cruel world. We are to provide our wives with a nest, a security, a place of warmth, and a place of nourishment. Again, this idea is relinquished in the case of the working mother. She should not be the one who nourishes and feeds; she should receive that provision.

In the curse in Genesis 3, the wife was cursed in two areas: (1) she would have pain in child bearing, and (2) she would have a hard time submitting to her husband---but both areas are centered in the home. Now notice where the curse on the man comes. He's cursed in that he will have to till the ground and work in the sweat of his brow to provide bread for his family. From the beginning it was assumed that the woman would be home with her children, meeting the needs of her family, and the man would be out working to provide for those needs. That is God's design. As Christ provides for the church, so the husband is to provide for his wife that which nourishes her and provides security.

c. *"For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and his bones"* (v. 30).

You may ask, "Why does Christ care for us as He does? Why does He meet every need we have? Why is He so wonderfully caring? Why did He go through all the things he went through to provide everything for us as a sympathetic, loving, faithful, High Priest?" The answer is in v. 30: we are members of His body---His flesh and His bone. We're one with Him. Not to provide for us would be not to provide for Himself. We are one with Christ.

1) *"He that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit"* (1 Cor. 6:17).

2) *"I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me"* (Gal. 2:20)

3) *"For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body"* (1 Cor. 12:13).

Because we are one with Christ, He will meet our needs.

Husbands, your wife is one with you. Not to meet her needs is to commit spiritual suicide, because you are one. People who violate their marriage destroy themselves.

The grace of God is amazing. God incorporates us into a body and says, "As Christ cares for His body, the church, and as a man cares for his own physical body, so is a husband to care for his wife---meeting for her needs and providing all that is necessary." Men, God has a high view of women. They are to be exalted, honored, and lifted up. We're to submit to meeting their needs---even if we must die doing it--and cause them to be pure, honored holy, and sanctified.

4. Unbreakable love (v. 31)

"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."

That is a direct quote from Genesis 2:24. It is nothing new. People say, "You've got to get the Bible up to date. Times have changed." But that is a direct quote. The Bible was written over a period of 1500 years; nothing has changed. Thousands of years back, when God first created man, He said, *"Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh."* Nothing has changed. It's the same Ephesians 5:31. Nothing has changed. It's the same standard; marriage is an unbreakable, indivisible union.

a. *"For this cause"*

Why is marriage unbreakable? Because marriage partners become one---and they cannot be separated. Some people think that a Christian can lose his salvation. But if that were true, Christ would have to cut off part of His own body. As members of His body, we cannot be separated from Him. The point is this: the body is indivisible and cannot be cut apart. It is one flesh and be one. Because of that, when you marry you are to leave your father and mother, join your wife, and become one flesh. It becomes an indivisible union, because you can't divide one.

b. *"Leave"*

The Greek word *λειπο* means "to leave." But the word used here is an intensified form, *καταλειπο*, and means "to abandon completely." Married couples run into a big problem if they don't leave their mothers and fathers completely when they step into the marriage relationship. That doesn't mean they shouldn't talk to their parents anymore; it means they need to have a conscious understanding of the new relationship that has been formed.

c. *"Joined"*

The Greek word used here is *προσκολλαιο*, an intensification of the word *κολλαιο*, which means "to connect us." *Προσκολλαιο* means "to glue together." The idea is that you are to leave, and then you are to glue the new relationship together. It is a new relationship, absolutely unbreakable. Two become one.

• ***What Does God Think of Divorce?***

Do you want to know what God thinks of divorce? Malachi 2:16 says, *"For the LORD, the God of Israel, saith that he hateth putting away [divorce]."* That's how

God feels about divorce. And by the way, God hasn't changed His mind, because in Malachi 3:6 God says, *"I am the LORD, I change not."* God has always hated divorce; He hates it now, and He'll always hate it. There's no divorce He doesn't hate. You may say, "But my divorce was justified. My partner committed adultery." God still hates it. He hates divorce on any terms or on any condition. He forgives it, but He still hates it. Now, He hates a lot of things He forgives, but that doesn't change the fact that He hates divorce.

I've had women say to me, "I'm finally going to divorce my husband. We have gotten a long for years, but he finally committed adultery: Now I can divorce him." Usually I often say to them, "You know what? God hates divorce. And not only that, God hates your satisfaction in considering your divorce justified." Don't be glad for evil. God hates divorce.

- ***Should You Divorce Your Partner I the Case of Adultery?***

When God designed marriage, He designed it to be like a body: indivisible, two becoming one. But many spouse aren't willing to forgive their partners when they sin. If Jesus divorced us every time we sinned, where would we be? Since we're love our wives the way Christ loves the church, how many times are we to forgive? How many times has Christ forgiven you? Should you cast your wife off if she is unfaithful? Did Christ cast you off were unfaithful? Did God cast Israel off when Israel committed adultery? Israel committed and still commits many adulteries, but some day God will recover Israel and give her the kingdom. The church, too, has sinned again and again; but Jesus does not cast us off. He keeps on cleansing us. If the spouse sins, your spouse should be forgiveness.

That kind of forgiveness is illustrated in the life of Hosea. God told Hosea to marry a woman who was a prostitute. The He told him to keep forgiving her for her continued prostitutions. And Hose did---he kept on forgiving her again and again. Finally, God restored their marriage into a wonderful blessing. There was true love, and she was purified. Then God said to Hosea, "That was an illustration of My relationship with Israel. I love Israel. She is My wife, and she commits adultery after adultery; but I'll never out her away. I still love her." And in the end, ultimately, He's going to regather that wayward wife back into the fold.

Look at the church, Jesus love the church. And even thought the church us unfaithful and sinful. He never puts us away. He keeps on forgiving us (1 John 1:9).

B. The Motive of Love (vv. 32-33)

Ephesians 5:32 says, *"This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church."* You may ask, "Why is it important to love like that?" Why is it important that marriage be based on those principles." Because it is a picture of the church. This magnificent picture was a mystery, never known in the past, but now revealed. The sacredness of marriage; so by your marriage, you are either a symbol or a denial of Christ and His church.

Because marriage is so sacred, Paul says in verse 33, *“Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband.”* If we would learn, in Christ, and the power of the Spirit, to base the marriage relationship on God’s principles, there would be an end to much anxiety. Approach your marriage God’s way. And watch God pour out so much blessing you won’t even be able to receive it all!

Focusing on the Facts

1. Described the characteristics that will work against the family in the last days (2 Tim. 3:2-3, 6).
2. His is the husband supposed to express his submission to his wife?
3. Do we deserve God’s sacrificial love? Explain your answer.
4. How does the world’s love compare to God’s love?
5. You will become greatly _____ to what _____ to love.
6. Define biblical love. Who is worthy to receive it? How did Jesus demonstrate it in John 13?
7. Love doesn’t act out what it _____; it does what is _____.
8. What must a husband do before he can properly love his wife?
9. Because Christ loved the church, what did He seek to do? What should be your goal with regard to someone you love?
10. In what two ways are Christians cleansed from their sins? Explain.
11. Why is premarital sex not an expression of true love?
12. How do we show that our bodies are important to us? How does that relate to a husband’s loving his wife,. According to Ephesians 5:28-29? How does the Lord care for the church according to Philippians 4:19?
13. Why is Christ so willing to provide for the needs of Christians?
14. How is the command about marriage in Genesis 2:24 evidence that the standards for marriage haven’t changed?
15. What is one of the biggest problems newly married couples might experience with their parents? What does Ephesians 5:31 command them to do?
16. What does God think of divorce? Has He changed His mind on that issue? Support your answers with Scripture.
17. If your spouse sins, what should be your response?
18. Explain how Hosea is an illustration of God’s forgiving love toward Israel.
19. Why is it important for marriage to be based on biblical principles?

Pondering the Principles

1. As long as you are looking for what you can get out of your marriage, you will never be able to fully give yourself to your spouse. Husbands, when was the last time you made a sacrifice for your wife by submitting to her needs and desires? Although your time may be valuable and your funds limited, what tangible expressions of love can you give your wife that will demonstrate how highly you value her as your life partner?

2. Men, if you love a woman, you should do everything in your power to preserve her purity. Do you ever encourage her to compromise her spiritual or moral standards? Or do you take advantage of the fact that she hasn't established any standards yet? What are you doing to draw her closer to God and to make her life more virtuous? Recognizing your mutual concern for your own body and the fact that it is the temple of the Holy Spirit, make sure that you care for your wife with at least the same amount of zeal.

3. A symptom of a deteriorating relationship is a fault-finding attitude. If you are hoping that your partner will sin so you can justify a divorce, your attitude is totally wrong. How many times have you sinned and been forgiven by God? Has God, in effect, divorced you? Paul tells us that nothing can *"separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus"* (Rom. 8:39). If an infinitely holy God keeps His promises to His children, who are undeserving of His love, we should be faithful to the one we have promised to love and care for until death. If you sense a growing separation in your marital relationship, pray that God would help you determine its cause and would empower you to build your marriage into one that honors and pleases Him.