



*Are You
Serious About
Marriage?*

by

Susan Zakula



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www.keepersofthefait.com

Foreword

I never thought *I* would write a book about marriage—*I*, who have struggled so much to learn what a godly wife should be. I thought books about marriage should be written by women who have been excellent wives and have had perfect marriages.

In my own search to become a godly wife, I read through many books, but they proved to be of little help to me personally. Most taught that if we just did thus and so, we would have perfect marriages; or they stressed philosophies of good marriages, while I was failing in the practical aspects of keeping a house clean, and keeping my husband happy. I did not know a Titus 2 woman who was actually living the Scriptures, successfully being a true helpmeet to her husband, and a happy mother of her children. I had nowhere to turn. Nowhere? Yes, I did have Someone Who knew all about being a helpmeet, for He, my heavenly Father, created me for this purpose, and He knew all the answers. Of course, just learning the answers was not enough. There was a struggle to put “self” to death, and learn to love as He loves.

These articles are a few of the things my heavenly Father has taught me through forty-plus years of marriage. Possibly it is because of my own difficulty in becoming a godly wife that I can truly understand the struggles of other wives. Perhaps this is also the reason why the Lord has allowed me to write the articles compiled here. May God have the glory, and may you be encouraged and blessed.

Susan

Contents

Foreword	3
Chapter I	Is Your Life Out-of-Kilter Too?	7
Chapter II	Beginnings	15
Chapter III	A Wise Woman	22
Chapter IV	Are We Good Followers?.....	30
Chapter V	Do We Love Our Husbands?	39
Chapter VI	What Is a Woman to Do?	46
Chapter VII	A Close Marital Relationship.....	54
Chapter VIII	How Do I Love Thee?	62
Chapter IX	Does His Heart Trust Safely in Thee? .	72
Chapter X	The Burden of Romance	81
Chapter XI	To Everything There Is a Season	89
Chapter XII	Absolute Obedience to Whom?	100
Chapter XIII	A Modest Proposal.....	156
Chapter XIV	Blessed Is the Man Whose Wife Is Happy!.....	179
More Resources	195



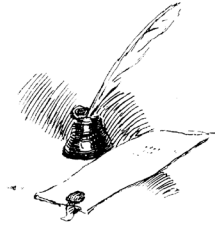
Chapter I

Is Your Life Out-of-Kilter Too?

Dear Susan,

I kind of “stumbled” onto your magazine by ordering the club membership with the Keepers at Home Handbooks that I found in the Timberdoodle catalog.

I have been reading the issues I received while having an enforced rest due to “burn-out” exhaustion caused by getting way over-extended, time and energy-wise, trying to homeschool, administrate a homeschool organization (as a home business), and do a number of other things as small home businesses to supplement my husband’s income while still staying home with my children. It all seemed right and necessary—but somewhere things went wrong. I found myself in a leadership role where I was more and more talking about things I no longer had time to do; getting impatient and angry with my husband and children for their failure and/or inability to “help me” with my overload of work; seeming to “have it together” but feeling more and more desperate and exhausted and wondering if even God had abandoned me—wondering where the “easy yoke” could possibly be. It’s a long story.



Are You Serious About Marriage?

Right now, however, I am trying to recuperate enough physically to “wrap up” my school business in order to pass it all on to the new director and am seeking to find where and how I got off the path of being “at home”—with serving my husband and children and home as my primary duty each day. I am finding my “garden” full of the weeds of hurry and neglect—both literally and figuratively. It’s hard to believe how out-of-kilter my life became in doing what seemed right—helping other women homeschool their children and encouraging them to stay at home, simplify, etc., etc.

I think sometimes that the encouragement we have received from “famous” homeschoolers to not only homeschool our children (which is a big job) in addition to being faithful to continue with the frugal home arts such as breadmaking, gardening, and sewing is a recipe for burnout that can also lead us right back into the “I can do it all, have it all, if I try hard enough” mentality that women in the working world promote. I’m not the only sincere mom I know who has found that she can’t follow in Mary Pride’s (and other’s) footsteps without breaking down. Somehow this ends up not being a quiet, at home kind of life. I’ve felt that even though my pursuits were home businesses, and the financial need was legitimate (these were not my hobbies!), I have ended up feeling that I was trying to serve not only two, but many masters—my husband (and God’s requirements of me as a mother) and the obligations and deadlines I had with all the people who were paying for my services. This conflict has just about torn me apart—and it has been damaging for my home and family.

Am I the only one who can’t make this work? Am I

Are You Serious About Marriage?

too idealistic to believe that the frantic pace that we seem to have to keep just to live these days is still, somehow, not the only option, or the right one? Do you have any insights regarding this dilemma? I'd appreciate hearing about it if you do. I have felt both deeply convicted and also comforted by reading your articles. I have been feeling so alone. . . . So many seem untroubled by the fast pace, the lack of time to thoughtfully discipline and carefully train their children, and the lack of time to be quietly at home.

California

This is one of many letters I receive from disappointed and discouraged women from around the country. Some have home businesses, some are overly active in church activities, some teach in Christian schools, some homeschool, and some just have too many activities pressing in on all sides of them. Their calendars are loaded with scheduled activities, and there is too much to do. Their marriages are stressed to nearly the breaking point, their children are not “turning out” as they had hoped, and they are burned out and ready to throw in the towel. How did such good intentions wind up so poorly? Where did things go so wrong?



My heart has been so heavy for so long for these dear women whose hearts are breaking and for all the young wives and mothers starting out on the same path and not seeing where the path leads. In ten years, their hearts will be breaking too!

Deceptions

How many marriages will be shipwrecked and children's lives destroyed by the deceptions of the evil one? Deceptions of the evil one? Yes, the evil one deceives with not only apparent evil, but with good things—good ideas, good

The most dangerous lie is the lie that is closest to the truth.

opportunities, good service, and good activities. How else will he be able to destroy good people's lives? My husband often says that the most dangerous lie is the lie that is closest to the truth. Isn't that also the most difficult lie to discern? A successful lie must have a considerable amount of truth in it, enough for people to believe at least part of it. If we fall for it, often only after a great length of time, after the path has caused us to stumble and fall, do we realize we have taken the wrong path. We are devastated not only that others have lied to us, but we are disappointed in ourselves that we believed the lie. Bitterness seeps into our souls. Some of us then try to crawl back to where we have gone astray and pick up the pieces and go on. Others cannot even face turning around. We know that we can never reclaim the lost time and the damage to our families. Despondency and depression may set in. There are those who turn their backs on God, church, and family at this discouraging time. They feel they can no longer trust anyone, including God.

Finding the Answers

My friends, God is not responsible for the mess we've made! God is faithful, and He is TRUTH! He alone has

Are You Serious About Marriage?

the answers. He can make our paths straight again. He is merciful. He can take up the tangled threads of our lives and weave them back together. He can bring our children back to Him. *“If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land,”* —2 Chronicles 7:14. This verse is so often used to refer to our country, but why not claim this promise for our families? To paraphrase, *“If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves* (yes, we must admit and confess that we have been wrong and have made wrong choices, that we were wrong to follow our own wisdom and to believe error), *and seek my face* (through prayer and His Word), *and turn from their wicked ways* (our wrong choices, lifestyles, pride; you see, wrong choices are wicked in God’s eyes), *then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and heal their land* (or family).” Unless we do humble ourselves and repent, He will not bring healing to our lives and the lives of our families. We must obey and believe Him, and not believe the popular notions we have been taught. *Proverbs 16:25* says, *“There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.”*

In future issues of *In Keeping with the Faith*, we will discuss some of these seemingly innocent misconceptions and the impact they have on our lives and our families. We will be talking about marriage. It will not be a cutesy discussion of seven ways to have a great marriage. Most of us have given up on that and thrown it in the trash long ago. One dear woman

Are You Serious About Marriage?

phoned and said she had read every book on marriage and none of them worked! Her marriage was still in the pits. We will talk about the hard issues of marriage and what God expects from us. Feel free to write and share your thoughts, experiences, struggles, and questions.

Not a Perfect Woman

Let me also say up front that I am not the perfect woman, the perfect wife, nor the perfect mother. Like many of you, I came from a family of unbelievers. I was a little feminist when the Lord mercifully saved me. His salvation was a mountaintop experience; becoming a godly, submissive wife has been a lifelong process. May I share, as one sister to another, that the biggest “argument” Jeff and I ever had many years ago was on the issue of whether I was submissive or not! It is funny now, but it wasn’t then. I had so much to learn to give up my selfish ways. God did not sprinkle magic dust on me just because my heart was willing. It was a learning process, learning about God and His ways. The more I continue to learn about Him, the more a loving wife I become.

Dear sisters, I am still learning! I have not arrived. If anyone tells you that she has the secrets for a good marriage, she is deceiving you. A good marriage lies in loving God more than we love ourselves. It is in becoming Christlike that we love our husbands and children as Christ loves them. That, in turn, blesses us with a loving family and good marriage. We do not work at developing a

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Are You Serious About Marriage?

good marriage. We work at submitting ourselves to our heavenly Father, being filled with the fruits of His Spirit, and the result is a happy relationship with our husbands. Sin is the separating factor. There is no pat recipe for marital bliss.

Is it difficult to really love someone else? Yes, it is, because we are so incredibly selfish. We want to do our own things, think our own thoughts, set our own schedules, and just plain have things as we like them. Oh, if we are in agreement with what our husbands want, we don't have too much trouble. If we really do not care about something deeply, we will let them have their way; but if we do care, there is a struggle.

I was just feeling quite satisfied with my level of wifely attention and submission when Jeff, who was a plant manager of a good-sized company, who was used to managing and bossing every detail of the company, resigned to come home to fully manage and direct Keepers of the Faith. This "manager" also came into my life twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, to manage every detail of me and my life! Was it a smooth transition? Absolutely not! Was it his problem? No. Mine! He has top notch organizational skills; I'm a messy. He is highly efficient; I putter. He found better ways to organize my (his?) kitchen cabinets, closets, etc. He has tried to make me more efficient (when inwardly I was quite happy with my level of efficiency). And so on



...

The Lord was teaching me that I had no idea what

Are You Serious About Marriage?

complete submission of every detail of my life to another was even about. My husband and I are as unlike as day and night, and yet my job was to be what he needed me to be, to meet his needs. I learned that “my” home was really his. “My” kitchen was really his. “My” time was really his. “My” life was really his. It was a process. I am a slow learner. My heavenly Father is patient and merciful. And I guess my husband really is patient, because he has waited a long time for his wife to become a godly woman.

This article is really just an introduction to the future series on marriage and the deceptive lies which divert us from the God-given purpose for our lives: being a helpmeet. May I encourage to be thinking on your own marriage and family. Are you satisfied that it is 100% pleasing to God, and is your husband 100% pleased with you? If your husband were to give you a downright objective report card, would you receive good marks in all areas? We tend to be easy on ourselves, but our husbands honestly know where we are lacking. Most importantly, if your earthly life were over today, and you were ushered into God’s presence, would God be pleased with the one job He has given to you—being a helpmeet? Will you have to say to God that you were too busy to be a good wife and mother? *“So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God,”* — Romans 14:12. Every woman too!

Susan

Chapter II

Beginnings

Where does one start with the extensive topic of womanhood and marriage? We women tend to focus on the external aspects of married life. I receive many questions such as, “What do you do in this case?” “What do you do if your husband does this or that?” “Where does a woman draw the line in obedience?” The questions range from the tragic to the trivial. The answer to one such question will usually not repair the marriage. When one problem gets solved, a new one presents itself the next day. Some women want a list of do’s and don’ts. A rule book will not work for a marriage. Many women struggle with the biblical male and female roles. They somehow feel that God has placed the woman in an inferior position. They fight against feelings of resentment and bitterness toward the man they married. Everywhere women are dissatisfied and struggling with such feelings.

What is the answer? Christian women have read the Scriptures, and their marriages are still in the pits. They have read countless books on how to have a great marriage, and their marriage is still not great. Again, what is the answer? Well, we are going to start at the beginning, but before we do, please pray that your heart and mind will be truly open. Please do not be defensive. Please do not say in your heart, “But what about this?”

Are You Serious About Marriage?

Please pray that your heart and mind will be erased and be a blank slate for God to write upon. *“Shew me thy ways, O LORD; teach me thy paths. Lead me in thy truth, and teach me: for thou art the God of my salvation; on thee do I wait all the day,”* —Psalm 25:4-5.

We live in such a perverted age. (Isn't every age?) The winds of feminism have blown into every corner of a woman's life. She is surrounded by a feminist society—books, media, friends, and sad to say, oftentimes, even the local church. There are even feminist versions of the Bible available. Women are confused, but we know who is the author of confusion: *“For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints,”* —1 Corinthians 14:33. So, if we want to rid ourselves of confusion, we must forget everything we have been taught, and return to the Word of God. God is truth. All else is error. This is absolute. We cannot argue with the Word of God. Any argument with God's Word reveals rebellion in our hearts.

The Beginning



The beginning—*“And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him. And out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof. And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field; but for Adam there was not found an help meet for him.*

Are You Serious About Marriage?

And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; and the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. 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. 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.” —Genesis 2:18-25.

You have probably read the above passage dozens of times. By now, it might be only words, instead of THE WORD OF GOD. Read it again, dear woman. This is *your* beginning. This is our great, wonderful, majestic God creating you, not from the dust, but from the man, for a wonderful, specific purpose, for God’s purpose for your very life. There is not one negative thought expressed in God’s intention for your being. God only created good things, and you are one of them. He did not create man better than you. He did not create man to have the better lot in life. God created you perfect, with a perfect job suited to your physical and emotional capabilities. God created you with the purpose of being a helpmeet for a man. This is what you are designed to do. This is what will bring fulfillment to your life. After all, God does know what will make you happy, and being a proper helpmeet is it, according to God. Do you believe it? Can you trust God?

So many women think they know better than God. They listen to the world’s philosophy and the evil one. They want more (more does not equal better) in life

Are You Serious About Marriage?

than God intended. They want more meaning, more importance, more fame, more power, more, more, more. They refuse to be content to “just be a wife.” Why do they seek more than God created a woman to be? They are deceived. We will come to some of these deceptions in later issues, but for now, let’s return to this most important reason of our creation, being a helpmeet.

What a Woman Means to a Man

I do not think most women realize what a woman means to a man. I know that I did not realize the depth of it until I read *Henry and the Great Society*. If you have not yet read this book, please do so. It is one of the greatest commentaries on the marriage relationship I have ever read, though it was not so intended. Henry loved his wife Esther, and she never really realized it. All Henry wanted to do was find time to spend with his wife, but he was always working to provide, and she was always busy doing things. It was so sad, but somehow it is a commentary on most of our lives.

Whatever level of happiness or unhappiness your marriage has evolved into, once upon a time, there was a man who loved you very much. He loved you so much that he wanted to spend the rest of his life being with you, taking care of you, and loving you. He wanted to leave his family and become one flesh with you. He wanted his own little kingdom with his queen and his future little heirs. Somehow, things went wrong for him too! (Women often think that only they are disappointed, never realizing how disappointed their husbands are with them.) He did not know that you would be too tired so much of the time, crabby, busy with the house, and visiting your friends. He did not

Are You Serious About Marriage?

know that the children would take up all your time. He did not know how great the living expenses would become. He somehow also became disillusioned with you.

Seldom does a woman phone or write about what a terrible wife she is; she only talks about her husband. She cries for herself, never for him. Both are wrapped up in their own misery, never seeing the misery of their spouse. The one flesh has been ripped in two. Have you ever thought of asking your husband what his dreams were, or does he even have any left? How is he disappointed in you? How have you let him down? Is the law of kindness always in your mouth? Is your spirit ruled by patience? Are you loving him and showing him your love in many small ways? When he says, "Take a ride to the hardware store with me," do you quickly respond with a joyful yes? When he says, "Sit beside me for a while," are you too busy? Do you snap and fret and complain, or do you smile contentedly? Do you listen to his woes or tell your own?

A man is looking for more than a housekeeper. He can hire that. He is looking for more than a cook. He can hire that. He is looking for a woman to love him, to become one flesh with him. He is looking for a woman to be a friend and a lover. Have you ever stopped to think just how much you might be letting him down?

You might be thinking, "No. My husband is not like that. He never wants to spend time at home or with me. When he is at home he plops in front of the television and shuts us all out." Dear woman, could the slightest reason for our husbands' inattentiveness be due, just maybe, to a little something on our part? We tend to

Are You Serious About Marriage?

be blame placers. You know, we do most things right and are justified in our actions. The problem must be his. Oh, we might say, “I know I’m not perfect, but you should see him!” We will admit to a little imperfection, all the while pointing out his great sins.

All major issues aside—major issues in a marriage may include abuse, marriage to a non-Christian, professing-but-not-practicing Christian, and immorality—and even though our spouses may have one or more of these, we are still called by God to have God’s love toward this man to whom we are committed in marriage. We are to have a 1st Corinthians 13 love, a love which never fails toward our husbands. God never said it was going to be easy. Certainly, Jesus’ payment on the cross for us, wicked sinners as we are, was not easy. It was the greatest act of love this world has ever known. God has called us to walk in the steps of our Lord and Saviour. Isn’t it time we stop crying “unfair” and begin loving?

Jesus Met Our Greatest Need

Jesus met our greatest need, our need for forgiveness for our sins, for salvation. *“Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another;”* —I John 4:7-11.

I have a feeling that if we asked our husbands what

Are You Serious About Marriage?

their greatest need is from us, it would be that we would love them. Regardless of their behavior, regardless of whether they are deserving, they need and desire our love. If we do not have this love, is it possible that we might not know God? *“He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.”* Perhaps we, too, are just professors and not possessors. *“Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?”* —2 Corinthians 13:5.

Let Us Examine Our Own Hearts

Dear friends, let us take our eyes off of our husbands and focus them on ourselves. Let us examine our own hearts and souls. First, know without a doubt that if you hold one negative thought in your mind about the position of a woman being a helpmeet to her husband, or think “somehow it just does not seem right,” you are laboring under deceptions of the evil one. You have been influenced by the doctrines of feminism. Cleanse yourself of these. Second, is God’s love shed abroad in your heart? Is your heart full of love toward your husband? If not, examine yourself to see why the fruit of the Spirit is missing from your life. Third, love is much more than an emotion; it is an act. God commands us to love our husbands. Start today with a dozen acts of love directed to your husband. If you say you are a godly woman, then have a godly love toward your husband, forgiving him his sins, and meeting his need for a lifelong, loving relationship with you.

Susan

Chapter III

A Wise Woman

“Every wise woman buildeth her house: but the foolish plucketh it down with her hands,” —Proverbs 14:1. We would all like to think of ourselves as wise women, but are we really? What is a wise woman? The definition for a wise woman would be found in Proverbs 1:7: *“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction.”* A wise woman *fears* the Lord. Because she *fears* the Lord, she knows “ . . . *the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men,*” —1 Corinthians 1:25. And, *“Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual,”* —1 Corinthians 2:12-13.

A Wise Woman

A wise woman *fears* the Lord, and because of this she *hears* and *obeys* God’s wisdom. She tests and tries the spirits, comparing them with spiritual things. A wise woman recognizes that if a teaching does not completely correspond to Scripture, it is *not* a wise teaching, no matter how reasonable or spiritual it sounds. A wise

Are You Serious About Marriage?

woman realizes that in her daily life, if a *practice* does not completely correspond to Scripture, she must forsake the practice, because she *fears* the Lord.

A wise woman *buildeth her house*. House means family, her husband, and children. *The foolish woman plucketh it down*. How does a foolish woman pluck it down? What makes her foolish? She does not fear the Lord. She holds the world's wisdom higher than God's wisdom.



What Might Be Influencing Our Lives?

Let's bring these thoughts a little closer to home. What foolish world's teachings might be influencing *our* lives, and as a result, be plucking down our own houses and bringing our marriages and families to ruination?

In the last issue, we spoke of God's command to love our husbands with God's love, meeting the needs of his life for love and all that love entails. What are some of the deceptions which keep us from this? Let's put feminism aside, as we know and have discussed that lie. What deceptions are pitfalls to women who believe in being wives and mothers, and believe in the biblical roles for men and women? Let us look at the following question sent in to a Christian psychologist and his reply. *"I am a homemaker, and I find that I have very few relationships beyond the four walls of my house. It seems that the more isolated I become, the more strain I feel between my husband and me. How can this affect my marriage?"*

The answer: *"It can be devastating, especially for a*

Are You Serious About Marriage?

full-time homemaker. Depriving her of all meaningful emotional support from outside the home puts enormous pressure on the husband-wife relationship.

“The man then becomes her primary source of conversation, ventilation, fellowship, and love, but she’s not his only responsibility. He is faced with great pressure, both internal and external, in his job. His self-esteem hangs on the way he handles his business, and the status of the entire family depends on his success. By the time he gets home at night, he has little left with which to prop up his lonely wife . . . even if he understands her.

“Let me speak plainly to the homemaker with a busy but uncommunicative husband: You cannot depend on this man to satisfy all your needs. You will be continually frustrated by his failure to deliver.

“Instead, you must achieve a network of women friends with whom you can talk, laugh, gripe, dream, and recreate. There are thousands of wives and mothers around you who have the same needs and experiences. They’ll be looking for you as you begin your search for them.”

Bad Advice . . .

On the surface, this sounds like good advice, but, upon comparing it with Scripture, it becomes very bad advice. A woman following this advice will only grow further away from her husband, the relationship will become more distant for the both of them, and one day they will wonder why they do not have a “house” anymore.

God is not mentioned in the advice. Self-esteem and status are deemed very important in the man’s life,

Are You Serious About Marriage?

and emotional support is considered a deprivation for the woman if not provided by outside relationships. According to this advice, the answer to this woman's problem is not a more meaningful relationship with God and her husband, but to find a network of female friends! This transposes God's two great commandments. "*Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets,*" —Matthew 22:36-40. Where is the scriptural basis for this advice?

The subtle deception here is that a woman cannot be contented with her husband and children within the confines of her home. The contention is that *God's will* cannot suffice for *her needs*. She is to look outside her home for fulfillment. She is to take the pressure off her busy husband, and have her needs met elsewhere. Of course, the entire focus is on her needs, her fulfillment, her self. There is no mention of her fulfilling her husband's needs, just her own. Also, are we to assume that God has mistakenly created this "intolerable situation" in which a woman is "confined" at home with her children? If so, then we must also assume that God is uninformed about a woman's needs.

The subtle deception here is that a woman cannot be contented with her husband and children within the confines of her home.

Are You Serious About Marriage?

Often, the major impact of a support network will be to keep a woman very busy outside of her home. Her thoughts and actions will be focused away from her family. Time spent away leaves less time for keeping a clean house, making good meals, tending a garden, and being rested for when her dear husband does come home. We should be thinking of how we can restore and refresh our husbands, but often we are too tired from trying to find fulfillment with our meaningful relationships.

We have so much free time in our generation. In previous eras, women were forced to be more focused on their families. If a woman did not work morning and night, there were not clothes for the family and food to eat. Husbands were working morning and night to bring in what little monies they could. Husbands and wives were fulfilled in each other in their mutual effort to bear and rear children, and provide shelter and food. Fellowship with other women, except among wealthy folk, was pretty much limited to Sunday church or an occasional visit. Meaningful relationships is a twentieth century phrase. Meaningful relationships are being sought to fulfill lives without meaning. Meaning is found in obedience to God's Word, not in relationships, especially those sought outside God's Word. Jesus never went around looking for meaningful relationships. He never sought fulfillment. When we focus on such "needs," we are never content. We are in the search mode. Searching implies an emptiness. Only Jesus can satisfy the longings of our soul. The Bible teaches those who love God to be content. *"And having food and raiment let us be therewith content,"* —1 Timothy 6:8.

Are You Serious About Marriage?

A Biblical Answer

What would have been a biblical answer to this woman's question? God called her to be a helpmeet, not a homemaker. A helpmeet focuses on a person to help. A homemaker focuses on a position. The dear man she married, who desires to live with her all the days of his life, needs a helpmeet. Dear woman, spend your days praying for him and serving him. Think of all the ways you can bless his life and make it easier. Is his home clean and restful in appearance? Is his laundry all done and put away? Is a delicious dinner awaiting him when he comes home weary from working in the world? Are you peaceful and serene as you await him? Are you rested so you can refresh him? Are his children clean, neat, and well-trained? Do they eagerly await Daddy, as you eagerly await him?

If a woman's heart and mind were focused on all these things, she would be fulfilled and happy. She would not need a network of women to fill an emptiness created by her lack of diligence to the needs that God has assigned her to fulfill. Isn't it amazing that the second chapter of Titus lists what young women should be taught, but does not include meaningful relationships with other young women to recreate, dream, laugh, and gripe? This is a self-created, imaginary void in a woman's life, not a real one. This is the world's wisdom which is foolishness to God. Is it foolishness to you?

Young wives may have a difficult time focusing their thoughts and actions on their new husbands. They may be used to having a great deal of fellowship with their female friends, having gab fests, shopping trips, and entertainments. They are quite used to planning their

Are You Serious About Marriage?

days with themselves in mind. A wife needs to plan her day with her husband in mind. It is no longer *her* day. It is *her husband's* day. It becomes meaningful only when she meets *his* wishes. Girlish friendships need to be set aside for important things.

Similarly, young women who have been in the working world have a difficult time changing their focus. They may make a great effort at finishing the “housework” so they can go on to the more seemingly important things in life. They do not realize that making a happy home and meeting their husbands’ needs *are* the important things in life. As a woman grows in the Lord, she begins to realize that what her husband thinks is important *IS* important. It becomes important to her, and that is what she tends, because she loves her husband, and that is the way God planned it. Then, life suddenly begins to take on meaning—God’s meaning.

Are we saying that a woman never needs to fellowship with other women? No, of course not, but the higher priorities must be taken care of first. Love comes first—self comes later, much later. A good visit with like-minded friends is always welcome, but it is not something which is a priority. Too often, the children are left with child care providers, and even the husband is left to his own devices while women are pursuing meaningful relationships.

Do not fall prey to this errant philosophy that teaches women to look outside of God and their families to find fulfillment and good times. A good marriage relationship can never be developed by hanging out with other women. God never tells us to seek fulfillment, but to obey, serve, and love. We should try it more often.

Are You Serious About Marriage?

It's very fulfilling.

In closing, a good rule of thumb is that anything which separates us from the truth of God's Word, or causes us to change our focus from what God has given us to do, is not truth. We must strive every day to keep our focus on being a proper helpmeet according to God, and not according to popular advice. Someday, the words we hope to hear from our Saviour will be "Well done, thou good and faithful wife."

Susan

Ideas on Keeping Our Focus—

- 1. Memorize the verses on being a helpmeet and wife, and read them every morning before you begin your day.*
- 2. Write in your journal or in the inside cover of your Bible your purpose for living and the job God has given to you.*
- 3. Do all that your husband asks you to do and then some.*
- 4. Show your husband in many small ways that you love and care for him.*
- 5. At the close of each day, read over your verses on being a wife. Ask yourself if you have done everything according to God's Word. Lastly, have you loved your husband well today?*

Chapter IV

Are We Good Followers?

“Are we good followers?” We all give acquiescence to the biblical truth that men are to be leaders, and their wives are to follow. It is very difficult for us to judge our own selves in this area of following. We tend to be easy on ourselves. I wonder if we are not sometimes even afraid to honestly ask our husbands how we are doing, for fear of knowing the real truth. We know that in the marriage relationship, man has authority over woman. Most of us do not like to be reminded of this truth, but *it is a good truth*, because it is God’s truth.

There are many women who say things such as, “I can’t follow my husband. He is not spiritual.” “My husband is just not a leader.” “My husband will not take the initiative to have family devotions.” “My husband is so indecisive. He just lets me run things.” “I wish my husband were a godly leader; until then, I must lead.” The list goes on. Is there just the slightest possibility that these might be “excuses” for us taking the lead? Could it possibly be that these excuses are not wholly justified?



What Is a Leader?

I wonder if we might, for a few moments, think

Are You Serious About Marriage?

about what a leader is. A person who leads is a leader. A husband is a leader. A HUSBAND IS A LEADER. The position of husband denotes leadership. If we are married, our husbands are our leaders, regardless of our personal opinions of their daily habits.

Perhaps we have a faulty picture in our minds of what a godly male leader is. We might perceive him as possessing physical strength and a charismatic personality. We might think that he surely would be devoted to God in everything, and just have a “way with words” to persuade folks to follow him. On the other hand, we are married to



Joe the plumber, who comes home tired and dirty after laboring all day to bring home what it takes for us to spend nice days in a comfortable house, and have good food on the table. He does not say too much in the way of great swelling words, but pays his bills, and is kind to needy folks. He helps his kids with their homework and cuts the grass on Saturday. He is nothing spectacular, but he is an okay guy.

A woman might be tempted to compare her “Joe” to a pastor or some other man in public leadership. This is a mistake—a very harmful mistake. For a woman to compare her husband’s qualities with those of another detracts from her followship of the leader that God has given her. If a woman is not careful here, she can easily transfer the “followship” of her heart to a man other than her husband. God’s Word says our husbands are our leaders. Personality and temperament have nothing

Are You Serious About Marriage?

to do with leadership. God does not speak of qualities; He speaks of position.

Who's Following Whom?

“To lead” means to go before or to show the way. “To follow” means to come after in sequence or to move behind in the same direction. Since we live in a physical world, let us look at leading and following in the physical realm. Let us speak of the *commonplace* ways a man leads, and see just how well we women follow in the *commonplace* happenings of our daily lives. Joe says, “I think we need a new lawn mower this year. The old one has about had it.” We, who never cut the grass or know the condition of the lawn mower, say, “Let’s make do for one more year. We have more important things on which to spend our money.” Joe was leading here. He was expressing his view on the direction to go. Let us call his wife Mary. Mary took over the lead and expressed her view. It has happened hundreds of times before. Joe does not want a conflict, so he yields to Mary. He *follows* Mary.

Joe comes home on Friday night. He has had a long hard week and is looking forward to spending time with Mary. He says, “Mary, let’s take a ride, just you and me. Let Susie (their seventeen-year-old daughter) watch the kids, and I’ll take you out for a hamburger.” Joe was leading. Mary says, “Not tonight. I have a lot to do.” Mary did not follow. She determined the course for the evening.

Joe had an interesting thought on a Bible verse. He shared it with Mary. Mary said, “That is not the meaning of that verse. I just heard Mr. So & So on the radio explain that verse, and he knows more than you.”

Are You Serious About Marriage?

Poor Joe can't even have his own thought about a Bible verse. His wife leads and tells him he is wrong according to another man's teaching. However, by using another man's interpretation, she not only denies Joe, her real leader, but also gives her allegiance to another man.

We see a pattern developing here. Mary mentally agrees that the divine order is God, Christ, man, and woman. Yet, day after day, she reverses God's order and leads. Then after years of this, she says, "Joe isn't a leader. I wish he were. I wish I was married to a real man."

How did things get this way? What could have Joe done differently? He could have asserted himself. He could have insisted on his way. Perhaps in the beginning he did, but the wrath of a contentious woman becomes a lot to bear for a lifetime. Joe opted for peace. His life is not a happy one. Mary is not really happy either. Mary longs for a leader, but she thwarts the leadership she has, and Joe longs for a wife to follow him. They both struggle with disappointment.

This is a sad story, and, most readers will say, far too simplistic. Yes, I know there are other issues to be considered, but for our purposes in this article, we are trying to nail down *daily leading and daily following*. If we cannot follow in the trivial, how can we follow in the important? You see, each day we are building on a foundation. Each day new bricks are laid. If each row is wrong, the final building, the final marriage relationship, will be wrong.

*If we cannot
follow in
the trivial,
how can we
follow in the
important?*

Are You Serious About Marriage?

If Joe is faithful to God, he will stick by his domineering wife. (Ouch! We don't want to be called domineering women, but isn't that what we are when we dominate every little decision? But we just know so much more than our husbands. Right?) What if Joe is not so very strong in the Lord, and he becomes weary of his wife's domination? What if he struggles under the load of family care compounded by an inverted home life? How terrible it would be if he should slip and fall prey to a woman who offers to "follow" him. If he is not committed to God when another woman willing "to follow" him comes along, he will be sorely tempted.



We will all "tsk" at poor Joe, and probably say that he just wasn't a spiritual man. "Poor Mary," we will say in pity. Mary's heart will cry out to God, and say, "I only wanted to serve You, God. If only You had just given me a spiritual man to follow. I just don't deserve all this pain and heartache." And so on.

As an example, I once knew a particular Christian woman very well. She was very feminine, sweet, soft-spoken, and quiet. Her husband abandoned her and her two little ones. Years later, she confessed to me that her husband was not all to blame. She told me that, although she possessed a quiet demeanor, she had an iron will. Her husband would become violently angry with her, because she would not yield her will on anything, even unimportant little things. God had convicted her that she was responsible for her husband's anger. She, in her opinion, deserved to be left. No one would ever have

Are You Serious About Marriage?

known this, least of all me. She could not undo all she had wrought, and she lived with years of guilt and pain.

My dear friends, we do make a difference in our husbands' lives. Little things do matter a great deal. Please understand that Joe will stand before God and answer, himself, for any sin on his part, but the Bible warns us not to cast stumbling blocks, and we will be judged for our sins.

What is sad is that even the children, as they get a little older, know the truth. How commonplace it is becoming to hear a teenage young person in a Christian home say something like, "We call Dad the boss, but Mom calls the shots." Why is this?

Whose Domain?

One reason is the deceptive philosophy that a man's domain is his work, and a woman's domain is her home. Therefore, as queen and ruler of her home, she is allowed to make all the decisions about the happenings pertaining to the home, from the trivial to the important. The man is just a guest in her queendom. Some men will even joke that if a man knows what is good for him, he will keep his mouth closed. How inverted we have become! First of all, a man's home is *his* domain, and the wife and children are members of *his* little kingdom. Therefore, he does have a great deal to say about what takes place in *his* home. If we are good helpmeets, we will see that *his* wishes are carried out.

Does this mean that women can never have an opinion? Of course not. Does this mean we follow blindly? Of course not. God is not asking us to be mindless, and neither are our husbands. The point I am trying to make is that in countless little ways, we take

Are You Serious About Marriage?

over leadership. As a consequence, we are building the habit of doing things our own way. The habit becomes stronger and stronger, until it becomes more and more difficult for us not to have our way. We then resort to arguing, and when arguing will not suffice, we use the silent treatment until we get our way. Things are out-of-kilter. We will wind up in a tug-of-war every day with our husbands unless we quietly submit.

God is not asking us to be mindless, and neither are our husbands.

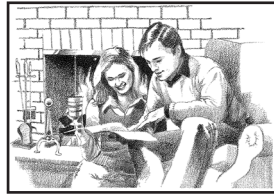
Instead of loving each other, we retreat into our corners until the next round of decisions must be faced. When a really big issue comes up, and the husband does know what is best, the wife can seldom yield because she is panicked at not being in control of the decision-making process. After all, if Joe does not know when to buy a lawn mower, how can he decide on the more important issues of life? We actually diminish our husbands' influence over us by constantly correcting them and making decisions ourselves.

I can see many red flags being thrown. What about when your husband wants you to do sinful things? The truth is that the husband probably asks his wife to do one hundred little things that are not sinful, and the wife does not do them. He then asks her to do something which she feels might be questionable, and she detests him for asking, and refuses to do this for spiritual reasons. However, when she looks for sin, she never looks in her own heart. She never tells anyone that he hates hot dogs, but she serves them once a week anyway, because it is convenient for her. He would rather that she not

Are You Serious About Marriage?

help out on the mother-daughter banquet, and attend every local craft show, but she does what she wants, ignoring his wishes. And so on . . .

Can you see where this is going? We need to examine our walk with our husbands. We need to look closely at how many things we are doing our way instead of his way. Oh, husbands may let us do what we want because they want us to be happy, but we know deep down they would prefer us not to do some things. That is the bottom line. If we know, even though they have given us permission, that they would rather we not do something, as godly wives, should we delight ourselves or delight our husbands?



If we were completely attentive to our husbands, and were perfect wives (if that were possible), would it not stand to reason that, for the most part, our husbands would be so happy with us that they would not ask us to do things that would bring us displeasure? There are those who say that marriage is spiritual, a mystic covenant, etc. God says, “*He made them male and female.*” That sounds pretty physical to me. A husband has many physical and emotional needs. That is why our husbands married us—to meet those needs.

In future issues, we will talk about some of the harder questions pertaining to followship. However, we can all find areas to be improved when we focus on the daily aspects of following instead of leading. For the fun of it—and I promise you, it will be fun—just see how many times we can be silent concerning our

Are You Serious About Marriage?

wishes, and say to our husbands, “Sure! That sounds great!” Their look of surprise may speak volumes about how little they really expect us to say that.

Dear friends, God *calls* us to love, honor, and obey our own husbands. Many of us would surrender to the *call of God* to serve on the mission field, and yet, we refuse to surrender to the *call of God* to serve on our home mission field. The place of service is not as important as the actual serving, and we serve by being good followers of our leaders. How about you? I know that I still have room to improve in my followship. Will you join with me in being good followers of our own husbands?

Susan

Chapter V

Do We Love Our Husbands?

I understand that some of you are impatiently waiting for this series to address what many feel is the key issue in marriage for women—obedience. Some are thinking, “Enough of all this! Get to the important issue—obedience! Do we obey or not?” Dear friends, I do hope you will be patient a little longer. You see, to discuss this obedience issue now would be like putting the cart before the horse. God did not create woman to obey man. He created woman to be a helpmeet to man. He did not look down on Eden and say, “I am creating a woman for obedience.” He said He was creating Eve for Adam. He created a man and a woman to be united in a marriage relationship, to love one another, and to make this earthly pilgrim journey together.

God did not create woman to obey man. He created woman to be a helpmeet to man.

In past issues we have discussed in detail the purpose for our creation, being helpmeets, and have talked about finding fulfillment within our feminine role. In the last issue we spoke about following our husbands in the commonplace happenings of our daily lives. In this issue we will talk about loving our husbands on a daily basis. You might be thinking, “I love my husband.

Are You Serious About Marriage?

What's there to learn?" The fact is, most of us do love our husbands. We say we do. We are, generally speaking, pretty good wives. At least we think so. We kiss our husbands good-bye in the morning. We keep their houses fairly clean and take care of the kids. What more is there to loving a husband?

What More Is There to Loving a Husband?

“And one of the Pharisees desired him that he would eat with him. And he went into the Pharisee’s house, and sat down to meat. And, behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee’s house, brought an alabaster box of ointment, and stood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment. Now when the Pharisee which had bidden him saw it, he spake within himself, saying, This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him: for she is a sinner. And Jesus answering said unto him, Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee. And he saith, Master, say on. There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most? Simon answered and said, I suppose that he, to whom he forgave most. And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged. And he turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest me no kiss: but

Are You Serious About Marriage?

this woman since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment. Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little. And he said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven.” —Luke 7:36-48.

We want to notice that this woman washed the feet of Jesus with her tears, wiped them with her hair, kissed His feet, and anointed them with ointment. Simon complained about all that this woman, a sinner, was doing to Jesus. Jesus pointed out to Simon that He, Jesus, had come to Simon’s house, and Simon had not given Him water to wash His feet; Simon had not kissed Him; Simon had not anointed His head, let alone His feet. Jesus concluded by telling Simon that this woman “loved much.” She certainly had reason to, but don’t we all? Jesus has forgiven us. I wonder if we would have been more like Simon or the woman?

This woman expressed her love, not with sweet words and promises, but in humility serving Jesus by washing His dirty feet and kissing them over and over. Now, our husbands are not Jesus, but they are our husbands. We are to love and serve them as unto the Lord. I wonder what Jesus would have to say about us? That is a sobering thought. Do you show your husband you love him in these humble and very physical ways? Do I? More likely than not, in the busyness of our lives, we have a great “head” knowledge of love, but know little of “heart” love. We tend to take



Are You Serious About Marriage?

our husbands for granted, instead of taking time to love them in the real sense.

Humble Ways to Serve Our Husbands

What are some humble ways we can show our husbands that we love them? This woman washed Jesus' feet. Does my husband stand on his feet all day? Do his feet ever get sore and ache? Do I care? Could I rub my husband's feet??? Perhaps my husband comes home hot and dirty. Could I run his bath water and have a fresh change of clothes waiting for him? Is he famished when he walks in the door? Could I have dinner on the table or at least have a snack waiting for him? Maybe I could really serve him in the evenings and on weekends. I could be watching for little opportunities to get him something cool or hot to drink. I could give a helping hand if he is working around the house. I could be patient if he is a little impatient. I could overlook the dirt he tracked into the kitchen. I could serve him breakfast in bed on Saturdays.

Some of us might be thinking, "Hey! What about me?" This is not about us. This is about showing our husbands we love them in countless, physical ways, just as this woman showed Jesus that she loved Him. Simon thought, "I'm your equal, Jesus. I don't need to lower myself to wash your feet. I don't need to show you that I love you." Do we want to be like Simon or the woman?

A Story of a True Helpmeet

I would like to share with you a story about a true helpmeet, which brought shame to my heart. This dear, elderly lady in her early sixties is married to a self-

Are You Serious About Marriage?

employed carpenter. They live alone in a tiny rundown house on a few acres. One day he was working on some trim on the exterior of a house for a customer. It was quite windy. This little lady was on the job with her husband holding the ladder steady for him. It began to rain heavily. She was in mud up to her ankles. She continued to hold the ladder for another hour until her husband finished what he had to do. She was recounting this story to my daughter. This little helpmeet was not complaining or looking for sympathy. She was so glad that she was there to hold the ladder so that her husband would not be at risk.

Dear friends, how many of us at age sixty would want to leave our warm homes, where we could be quilting or reading, to hold a ladder for hours on end for our husbands? This woman is not a Christian; however, she looks at her husband with eyes of love, and always speaks kindly of him. I have to admit how very selfish I am in comparison to this woman. Most of us are willing to serve our husbands, but only when we feel good or have little else to do or it is something we do not mind doing. In other words, we still put ourselves first, and our husbands can wait.

Most of us are willing to serve our husbands, but only when we feel good or have little else to do, or it is something we do not mind doing. In other words, we still put ourselves first, and our husbands can wait.

When we can begin to put our husbands' desires and

Are You Serious About Marriage?

needs before our own, when we begin to look for those needs without waiting to be asked, we might just be starting to love our husbands as we should.

You see, this little woman's husband *is* the center of her life. She has no life apart from being with and serving him. She has none of this world's goods, no meaningful relationships apart from her husband, no fun-filled vacations, not anything we would want or envy. However, it is very apparent that she is happy. Happy? How so? Although she is not a Christian, she is happy fulfilling the purpose for which she was created, which is being a helpmeet to her husband. God's ways work. It is too bad that we as Christian women do not realize this truth like some women who do not even know the Lord.

A Challenge

May I leave you a little challenge? Why not take some quiet time to look honestly at your marriage relationship, as perhaps God might look at it? Ask yourself some penetrating questions such as the following.

- ✦ Only one woman washed the feet of Jesus; would I have been the one? Would I have even been a second?
- ✦ Although we should not compare ourselves to others, could we have held the ladder in the mud and rain, and counted it a joy to help our husbands? Would we be willing to spend our days like that?
- ✦ How do we spend our days? Do we, in countless little ways, *show* our husbands that we count it a

Are You Serious About Marriage?

joy to serve them?

- ✦ Do we make their lives easier?
- ✦ Are we grateful for their provision, or do we complain that there is never enough money, or that we need more things?
- ✦ Do we complain at the end of the day about how hard we have it, or do we listen to how hard they have it?
- ✦ Do we give sympathy or demand it?
- ✦ Do we look for our husbands to come home to give us a break from the kids, or do we look to give our husbands a break from the working world's demands?
- ✦ Do we put ourselves first or our husbands first?

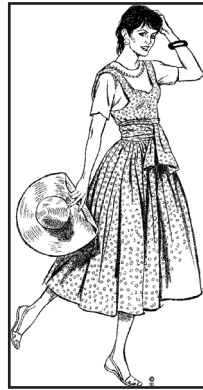
These are tough questions which demand honest answers. We seek not to be great Christian wives. We seek not to have happy marriages. We seek to walk in the steps of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, Who Himself gave us an example of washing feet in humble servitude. You see, the issue of being a wife is much greater than obedience. The issue is—love. The question is not, “Are we willing to obey our husbands?” but, “Are we willing to love our husbands?”

Susan

Chapter VI

What Is a Woman to Do?

Can a woman work outside her home? Should a woman have a home business? Should a woman work at the voting polls? Should a woman be an author? Should a woman publish her own magazine? Should a woman run a daycare facility in her home? Should a woman have a profession? How involved should a woman be in a ministry outside her home? Should a woman teach a ladies' Bible class, do service cleaning the church, prepare funeral meals, or assist in secretarial duties? As one's children grow older, can one do more? Should one do nothing? How does one know when to serve at home and when to serve outside the home?



These are a sampling of the many questions women are asking. It seems that we women are intensely interested in what a woman should do with her life, and rightly so. Women care that their lives should be in accordance with what is right. However, we must be very careful as we sort these matters out. Not all women face identical circumstances in life. Each of us should make sure that the focus of deliberation on such topics is our own life and our life only. It is not our

Are You Serious About Marriage?

job to determine an acceptability list as a standard by which all other women are measured. If we adopt such a “standards list,” it becomes all too easy to slip into the habit of judging other women by how they conform to our own personal list. Our human nature seems to crave peer conformity. We tend to feel more secure if everyone does as we do. When we look around and see women doing other things that are not on our list, the temptation immediately comes to compare as to who is right and who is wrong. We can begin to feel threatened. Often, without our being fully conscious of it, we begin evaluating ourselves and what we are doing against others and what they are doing. Before we know it, our list can easily replace God’s Word as our standard.

Of course, we all know that expecting peer conformity is no more godly than succumbing to peer pressure. To follow the crowd is wrong, but it is just as wrong for us to compare ourselves with each other. *“For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise,”* —2 Corinthians 10:12. So to put it very bluntly, it is none of our business what other women are doing. The Word of God tells us *“Who art thou that judgest another man’s servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand,”* —Romans 14:4. Jesus also told Peter not to be concerned with what John would be doing. *“Peter seeing him saith to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this man do? Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I*

Are You Serious About Marriage?

come, what is that to thee? follow thou me,” —John 21:21-22. Let us put blinders on our eyes, looking to neither the right nor left, and look straight to our Lord’s Word and see what it is we, personally, should be doing.

When a Question Arises . . .

Whenever a question arises, there are two precepts that we should bear in mind: God’s purpose for our creation and His divine order.

The first precept, the purpose for our creation, is found in Genesis 2:18. *“And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him.”* Our job title is “helpmeet.” What does helpmeet mean? To help or meet another’s needs. Who is the “other” in our lives? If a woman is married, it is her husband. So, each woman is to meet the needs of her own husband. God’s perfect wisdom did not list the specifics of our job title, but God gave the purpose for our lives. He knew the specifics listed under the title “helpmeet” would change somewhat for each woman according to the man whose helpmeet she was destined to be.

Basic Needs

Most of the basic ways in which men need help are similar. A man needs a woman to be his helpmeet physically and spiritually. A man needs a woman to love him, bear his children, nurture them, and keep his home. A man needs his wife to be thrifty and practice economy to help ensure the family’s financial stability. A man needs his wife to provide nutritious meals so the family will be as healthy as possible. A man needs his wife to train and teach the children in his absence.

Are You Serious About Marriage?

A man needs his home to be kept in a comfortable state and tidy appearance. A man needs his wife to pray for him and be a helpmeet spiritually. These things are similar for all couples and their marriage relationships. So, when the question arises of what a woman is to do, or, better yet, what we should each be doing personally, we must acknowledge that *anything which would prevent a woman from being wholly involved in meeting the needs of her husband would not be of God. God would never thwart His own purpose for creating a woman.*

Anything which would prevent a woman from being wholly involved in meeting the needs of her husband would not be of God. God would never thwart His own purpose in creating a woman.

Different Needs

Now, instead of the similar ways all women help their husbands, let's talk about the different ways each woman serves her own husband, the specifics of her own job title. A woman does not need a list of approved activities. *A woman simply needs to ask her husband what it is that he wants her to do to help him.* For example, a pastor might need his wife to play the piano, oversee the nursery, or make visitation calls with him. A deacon may ask his wife to help him care for the needs of the widows, to gather food baskets for the needy, or to help him with his boys' class. The farmer might ask his wife to do his bookkeeping, help with milking the cows, tend a big garden, or pick up supplies.

Are You Serious About Marriage?



The computer consultant might ask his wife to answer the phones while he is out on jobs or help with typing instructional manuals. The hardware store owner may need his wife to help at the checkout counter several hours a week, or help with ordering inventory for the store. The self-employed husband nearly always will need the help of his wife. The man employed elsewhere may need his wife to run errands and keep things running smoothly at home while he is away. If he is involved in activities at church, he may need his wife to help him be prepared and stay on top of things. So we see that a woman is to be very busy working diligently helping her husband. She is *not to be doing her own things*. She is *to be helping him do his things*.

We must be careful not to be legalistic when we use the words “keeper at home.” God was not saying that a woman should never step outside of her husband’s home to help him. He was simply saying that it was her responsibility to keep his home by caring for and relieving him of the daily details of his household. This is the meaning of helpmeet, and it is a full-time job! *A woman’s husband determines how she is to help him.* We are never out of God’s will by meeting the needs of our husbands. A wife is to be involved in her husband’s life. She is “one” with him.

Litmus Test

Anything which would prevent a woman from being wholly involved in meeting the needs of her husband

Are You Serious About Marriage?

would not be of God. This is the litmus test for the question, “What is a woman to do?” If a woman is doing something her husband does not wish her to do, she should stop doing it. If a woman has accepted too many outside responsibilities, which cause her not to be able to fulfill *all* of her husband’s needs, the biblical thing to do would be to resign the activities and meet his needs. A woman is made for her husband, not for outside activities.

If her ministries take her away from him, her ministries are not of God. God would not ask a woman to do anything that would keep her from fulfilling His purpose for her life. If her hobbies keep her too busy for her husband, the hobbies should go. We must always remember that there is no difference between the secular and the sacred—all that we do for our husbands, we do for God. It is *all* sacred. Our husbands are our ministries.

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The Second Precept

The second precept to consider when we are faced with the question of what a woman should do is the precept of divine order.

Divine order lists man as the head of the woman: “*But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God,*” —*I Corinthians 11:3*. A

Are You Serious About Marriage?

man needs a woman to follow him as he lives out his life. God's order does not change with personalities or differing marriage relationships. God's order is settled forever in Heaven. Again, when the question arises of what a woman should be doing, we must acknowledge the truth that *anything which would cause God's order to become reversed would not be of God.*

Anything which would cause God's order to become reversed would not be of God.

When we take a close look at what a woman should do, we should be able to discern if a woman's activities are in alignment with His order. Role reversal, or reversing God's order, is what feminism is all about. A woman cannot have her own business, have her husband work for her business, and preserve God's order. That *is* role reversal. It may appear on the outside that responsibilities are divided, but if it is the woman's business, in her name, her husband is really her employee. That is the great danger of home businesses started by the woman. When the business begins to grow, the husband often comes home to work *for* his wife, even though he supported the business financially, and really owns it. If it has not been understood right from the beginning that the husband is the CEO, and the wife the employee, it will not become the case when he joins the business full time. The path may look rosy at the beginning, but the end is not pleasant. The end of this path is generally the end of the marriage, even if divorce is not the final outcome. God's divine order is

Are You Serious About Marriage?

not in place. Remember, God's Word teaches us that the husband should be known in the gate, not his wife.

If the husband begins a home business, and his wife helps him, and it grows and prospers, and he comes home to operate it full time, there is no role reversal. It is the man's business from start to finish, and the woman is helping him. God's divine order *is* in place. Again, the husband is known in the gate, not his wife.



In conclusion, we must prayerfully consider this important question, "What is a woman to do?" We must examine our own lives in the light of God's divine purpose and divine order, and make any and all necessary changes to reflect our heart attitude of love and obedience to God. We need not look around at other women to see what they are doing, or point out the sin in their lives, but look to ourselves and our own relationship with God and with our husbands. We need to remove the sin from *our* lives.

So what is a woman to do? She may live her life meeting the needs of *her* husband, and do anything which *her* husband permits her to do. In a future article we will talk of the changing seasons in a woman's life, and how these seasons not only mature a woman, but allow for different avenues of ministries at different times in life.

Susan

Chapter VII

A Close Marital Relationship

Since the lead article in this issue deals with building a close family relationship, I thought it might be timely to focus on building a close relationship with our husbands. A relationship can be a peculiar thing. It can sometimes become as strong as steel while enduring the worst winds of life, yet it can also sometimes become as fragile as an ancient newspaper until it is destroyed by a gentle breeze. Marriage usually begins with the best of intentions, but those intentions can slowly wither into bitter disappointments until, in some cases, the relationship reaches a point where it will collapse entirely under the weight of a single straw.



We see marriages dissolving everywhere around us. Some women like to self-righteously argue that a man's commitment to the marriage vows keeps a marriage together, not the personal actions of the woman. They forget that the woman also makes vows at the marriage altar—vows about her actions and how she treats her partner, not about simply staying under the same roof. She makes commitments to a person. If she does not keep these commitments during the

Are You Serious About Marriage?

marriage, the marriage vows have already been broken, and the marriage relationship is in the process of being destroyed already. How does this happen? Why does the relationship break down? How can we prevent this breakdown in our own marriages? How do we build and maintain a close relationship with our husbands which will endure?

The Word of God Has the Answers

As always, the Word of God does have the answers. It is so incredibly simple that we are truly blind to miss it. *“And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself,”* —Luke 10:27. We love God with all our heart, soul, strength, and mind. This means we are absolutely obedient to Him in all things. We are loving, kind, forgiving, patient, long-suffering, peaceful, diligent, holy, contented, and the list goes on. We also strive to keep the second commandment and love our husbands as ourselves. Our husbands are our closest neighbors. We would therefore, without hesitation, put our husbands before ourselves.



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Wow! What a list! God expects no less!

You see, we are married to humans, men. Although we expect them to keep the two great commandments, God requires us to obey His two great commandments

Are You Serious About Marriage?

regardless of what our husbands do. God does not accept excuses from us. We shall each give an account of ourselves to God. “*So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God,*” —Romans 14:12.

Marriage — A Relationship

Marriage is a relationship. Once upon a time our husbands sought us out to have a lifelong relationship with us. Their expectations, as well as our own, were bright with anticipation of all the future years we would spend together sharing our lives. It is a very unfortunate thing that, as the brightness of those expectations has dimmed, some men have looked beyond their marriage to another relationship. It is quite true that God does not sanction such behavior. However, the man’s responsibility toward marriage vows is a topic for another article. Our interest here is in developing a relationship which will, at least, not *cause* him to look elsewhere. When a man seeks that second relationship, it is seldom for money or power. It is often because he has no first relationship. His partner becomes so busy fulfilling her notions of what a wife should be that she fulfills none of his desires in a marriage partner. Sometimes the illegitimate relationship starts out with just a friendly conversation or sharing a problem or need—basically just a little genuine interest in *him*. Men of all ages need and desire that sort of relationship with a woman.



What Goes Wrong?

What happens to a marriage relationship to cause a

Are You Serious About Marriage?

man to weaken in his resolve to keep his marriage vows? Sometimes it is only daily life. The work schedule, the wife's workload, the children, the financial burdens, society's demands, and the general busyness of life can sometimes leave no time for a husband and wife relationship. The problems and pressures crowd in and squeeze out the time necessary for properly relating to one's spouse.

It is not unusual for women to overcrowd their schedules and invert their priorities so that they have little to no time left for their husbands. Year after year, the husband quietly waits in the shadows, hoping still to have some time with his wife, hoping that with the next year, or the next phase of life, things will change; but he never seems to qualify for her list of priorities. She seems to always have new ones that leapfrog him. Finally, hopelessness sets in. He realizes that he will never make the list. He decides he has waited most of his life for something that will never happen because the person he lives with has no idea that it should. He can then easily become vulnerable to the slightest attentions of another. Satan is always waiting in the wings to present temptation to a lonely man.

We women seem to think we are doing our duties to our husbands if we provide them with clean houses and meals. After all, are we not busy with the demands of our children's education and training, the pressing demands for service and ministry at church, lending a helping hand to our friends, tending to our hobbies, giving ourselves huge "to do" lists, and keeping up with the latest reading



Are You Serious About Marriage?

and social events? What more does a man want?

Most of these things are not even on his list. They are not why he married. He wants a woman with whom he can have a lifelong relationship. He wants a friend, a helpmeet, a lover. He wants the girl he married. Where did she go? It is so interesting to live up here in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. Most folks would not think of this as a retirement community. Who would want to live in the snowy north when the sunny south seems so appealing? However, the population is over 50% elderly here, elderly meaning people in their sixties, seventies, and eighties! It is such a blessing to observe these folks as they still go out to dinner, take walks, and have such good times with each other. They are silver-haired, and often out of physical shape, but they still talk and laugh together, and are still sharing life. The children have long gone, but they remain close and happy. It is marvelous to behold their lives.

Choices to Make . . .

Dear friends, it costs no money to be close to our husbands, only our time and attention. All women have the same amount of time, and can give the same kinds of attention to their husbands. It is our choice. Choice? Yes, we have choices to make. We can choose to keep the two great commandments, or we can be rebellious and break these commandments. Ouch! Rebellious sounds like too awful a word to describe us, but it is how God would describe us, and someday we will come face to face with Him. We can fool ourselves, but never our God. The biggest thing that prevents us from keeping God's



Are You Serious About Marriage?

commandments, and, therefore, from relating to our husbands as they wish us to, is sin. That sin happens to be putting ourselves in front of God and loving ourselves more than our husbands.

How do we love ourselves more than our husbands? Countless ways. Our schedules are already overloaded, and Mrs. Smith at the church needs help with the fellowship dinner on Saturday. Can we make a dish and help with the set-up? Do we tell her yes, and then tell our husbands that we are too busy for them? We really want to take a course in quilting, and so we sign up for one. After all, we owe it to ourselves, right? Under which commandment does that fall?

We spend an afternoon reading while the ironing piles up and dinner preparation is delayed. Later that afternoon, when we rush about trying to catch up, we become tired and really don't want to be bothered with anyone. But the phone rings and we visit with Susie for an hour, and then frantically try to throw a dinner together. Again, we are exhausted, and, oh, how we bemoan our exhausting life. And, of course, our husbands feel guilty.

However, the truth is, our lives are full of what *we* are doing. Our husbands come home expecting a peaceful, tranquil atmosphere. Instead, the house is a mess, kids are cranky, dinner is not ready, and we gripe and complain about how hard we have it and just can't get it all done, and somehow it is all his fault. He retreats behind the newspaper or the TV screen. Where is his sweetheart and his friend? How did she turn into this overworked, complaining, tired wife? We complain that he is no longer romantic. Where is the romantic

Are You Serious About Marriage?

woman that he married? He cannot find her.

If our Lord Jesus were coming for dinner, we would be ready, whatever it took. Our house would be cleaned, we would be presentable, and dinner would be on the table. We would not keep Jesus waiting. Furthermore, we would greet Him at the door and tend to His every need. If Jesus wanted to take a walk after dinner to talk with us, we would quickly accompany Him. We would have sweet fellowship with Him. What about our husbands? *“Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies. The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil. She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life,”* —Proverbs 31:10-12.

Do we carry the heart of our husbands safely? Can our husbands trust us with their hearts? Can we say that we do them good all the days of our lives? Are we their best friends? *“Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends,”* —John 15:13. Do we have the greater love? Do we lay our lives down for our husbands?

How to Ensure Closeness

Dear friends, the way we ensure the closeness of our marital relationship is in the keeping of the two great commandments. It is not in *Twenty Steps to Build a Close Relationship*. It is in obedience to God that we find joy, peace, and happiness. It is in laying

It is in obedience to God that we find joy, peace, and happiness. It is in laying ourselves aside that we lift up our husbands. It is in giving that we receive their love and loyalty.

Are You Serious About Marriage?

ourselves aside that we lift up our husbands. It is in *giving* that we receive their love and loyalty. We must say no to ourselves. It is within our power to grant our husbands' wishes and desires. It is within our power to say "Sure. I'd love to. Let me get that for you. How can I make you comfortable? Do you need me to do anything for you?" It is within our power to say no to the hundred and one outside activities, to shut off our phones, to limit our outside fellowship, and to focus our time and attention on our husbands, our protectors, our providers, and our best friends. I can never understand why so many women want another female for a best friend when they could have their husbands for their best friends. If a woman just turned her attention in her husband's direction, her need would be filled, and so would her husband's. Consider this question: "Who was your best friend when you were courting?"

In closing, I'd like to share one last thought. It is in loving God that we learn to love others. As we spend time with God in prayer and Bible reading, as we weep over our failures and sins, as we beg for more wisdom, and, yes, beg for more love for our husbands, and as we commune with God, He will teach us His ways. As we continue to learn His ways and learn to die to ourselves, He will change us and fill us with His love, and give us abundant grace to live His Spirit-filled life. It is in loving God with our whole soul, heart, and mind that we will find we have His love with which to love our husbands. God's love is a love that never fails, and it is through His love that our marriage relationships can grow strong and endure the length of our lives.

Susan

Chapter VIII

How Do I Love Thee?

This issue we want to spend some time answering a most difficult question which many women face at one time or another in their marriages. “How do I love this man to whom I am married when I don’t really love him at all? In fact, there are times when I seem to despise and resent him. There are times when I look at him in disgust. What can I do?”



I receive some of the most heart-rending letters from women who are living miserable, defeated lives. Although their husbands are not usually living a godly life, they are not asking their wives to commit any serious sin with them. There simply is no relationship, except maybe one which is filled with friction. In the secret recesses of their hearts, they wish (dream) that the marriage could be over, but, alas, each new morning finds that it is not over. Each day is something to be endured, instead of lived joyfully.

All Marriages

All marriages have the potential to disintegrate into nothingness or the potential to meld into something solid. A marriage is not built on the big decisions in life, but the countless, little, seemingly unimportant

Are You Serious About Marriage?

decisions concerning the details of daily living. We cannot blame our unhappiness on someone else (our husbands). We must put the responsibility on ourselves.

We must also realize that the enjoyable emotion—which we often erroneously call love—is just that, an emotion, often times a fleeting emotion. It is a fuzzy feeling that sometimes floods our souls, and other times departs with our hormones. We must discard this emotional or hormonal “love” and find out what God says “love” is. There are some women who claim that God’s Word does not command a woman to love her husband. Those are foolish women indeed who do not even realize that the second greatest commandment, “*Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself,*” —Matthew 22:39, includes their husbands!

We are not entitled to the option of simply enduring our spouses, but we are commanded to love them. It is a job assignment which

We are not entitled to the option of simply enduring our spouses, but we are commanded to love them.

mandates *no emotion*. It is a job assignment we women can perform, if we make up our minds to do it, or shall I say, yield our wills to do it. Oh, how easily we might sing the song in church, “I Surrender All,” and yet we do not surrender the right to not be happy with the person to whom we are married. Some folks talk about a person’s Christianity being real, using the cliché, “where the rubber meets the road.” For a woman, the rubber meets the road in the daily marriage relationship—in her role as helpmeet, friend, and one who loves.

Are You Serious About Marriage?

Settle the Matter!

Thus, first, we must settle this matter once and for all. We *are commanded* by God to love our husbands as ourselves.

Set Aside Our Sins

Second, we must set aside our sins. Our sins? Oh, yes. Do we indulge in self-pity? Is that why we are bemoaning our hard lot in life? God's Word has the remedy for that. Can we not say as Paul did in Philippians 4:11-12, "*Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need*"? *I have learned!* Notice, Paul did not say that God sprinkled him with pouffle dust to make him content. He *learned* contentment. It is something we must do for ourselves. Marriage provides a perfect opportunity (school) for this learning.

We must say to ourselves: "This is it. This is my life. This is my husband. These are my children. I cannot live another's life. This is my life to make of it what I will. This is my life for which I am accountable to God. I am responsible for my life."

Whew! When we can say that, we have made a great stride in maturity. Of course, as we *learn contentment*, we will find that we have stopped complaining about what we do not have, or what we do not like in our lives. Sometimes, it is that sneaky sin of pride which causes so much discontent. We feel we deserve more because we are worthy of more. Not so! We are every bit as wicked as our husbands. We deserve hell, but praise God, He

Are You Serious About Marriage?

loved us enough to send Jesus to die for our sins that we might have His righteousness and be forevermore in Heaven with Him. What does God ask of us in return? To love Him and to love our neighbor or husband! Is that too much? What a privilege and honor we have to love others as a measure of our gratitude to God for loving us! How thankful our own hearts should be that God gives us such a gracious opportunity to show our love for Him by loving our husbands.

Can you get just a little excited at the prospect of loving our husbands for God? Do you see how wrong it would be to say to God, “I don’t want to show my love for you in this way. I want to choose my own areas of loving you. I want to do things that are easier for me.” “I, I, I.” There is plenty of “self” in wanting our own way instead of rejoicing in His way.

Focus

Focus—a central point, as of attention, attraction or activity; to concentrate or to focus one’s thoughts. When we belong to the Lord we have a new focus. The Lord is our spiritual focus and our husbands are our earthly focus. God says, “Love me with your whole heart, soul, and mind; and love your husband as yourself.”

Instead of focusing on the past, forget it. Instead of focusing on Mr. Perfect at church, forget him. Instead of focusing on what might have been, forget it. Focus on him, your husband. He is to be the central point of attention, attraction, and activity in your life. Is he?

God has not asked us to be critical of our husbands. Surprised? Criticism is not our job. Our job is to love and help them. You know we are to love our husbands as ourselves. We are to treat them as we would wish to

Are You Serious About Marriage?

be treated. Do we want to be criticized? Do we want all of our failings pointed out? Do we want to be reminded of our past? If we are honest, most of us have a list a yard long of personal failings in our lives.

God has not asked us to be critical of our husbands. Surprised? Criticism is not our job. Our job is to love and help them.

Why is it so easy to not focus on our own failings and say “Oh, well,” and yet, we never seem to miss—and often point out—the failings of the men to whom we are married? I am grateful to my husband for even loving me at all because I know I am a wicked, selfish sinner.

How Do I Love Thee?

We return to the title of this article, “How Do I Love Thee?” What does God require of us in this area of love?

“A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another,” —John 13:34-35. Do our husbands know we are disciples of Jesus Christ by our love toward them?

“Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if

Are You Serious About Marriage?

ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so? Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.” —Matthew 5:43-48.

These verses should be convicting to us. It is so easy to love our good friends, those folks who are always nice to us because they do not have to live with us, and the kind people at church; but it is so very difficult to love those who use us, who require hard things of us, who sometimes are not on their best behavior and do not always talk nicely to us, etc. My Saviour said that I am no better than a publican if I do not love those who make my life difficult. He says that I have no reward if I am only friends with those who only pat me on the back. For a woman to profess her love for her God, and in the same breath say, “I just cannot love this man to whom I am married,” is an oxymoron. Dear ones, we should weep over our lack of love, ask God for forgiveness, and strive to be perfect (mature), that we might grow up and be like our heavenly Father.

For a woman to profess her love for her God, and in the same breath say, “I just cannot love this man to whom I am married” is an oxymoron.

We so want the easy life, but we are told “*Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ,*” —2 Timothy 2:3. Endure hardness means to suffer affliction. It is written of our dear Saviour, “*Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the*

Are You Serious About Marriage?

things which he suffered,” —Hebrews 5:8. Do we think that we ought not to suffer hard things?

“For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously: Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.” —I Peter 2:21-24.

Can we live these verses? When a husband criticizes or demeans his wife, can she not “revile” back? Can she not threaten him? Can she return kindness for evil?

You might be saying, “Susan, get real! This is supposed to be an article on loving our husbands. Tell us what we should be doing!” I know of no better answers than the Scriptures! I could give a list of 100 ways to show love to our husbands, but these verses cover them all.

“And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise. For if ye love them which love you, what thank have ye? for sinners also love those that love them. And if ye do good to them which do good to you, what thank have ye? for sinners also do even the same,” —Luke 6:31-33. The only thing which keeps us from loving our husbands is our wicked, prideful, sinful SELF! And—let us not fool ourselves—Jesus said we do not love Him either when we refuse to love another!

“This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you.” —John 15:12.

Are You Serious About Marriage?

“Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father’s which sent me.” —John 14:23-24.

Practical Outworking

What is the practical outworking of this? If we love God, we will love our husbands for no other reason than because they are our husbands. Period. Not because they are good husbands, worthy husbands, nice husbands, but because God said we are to love them. We shall be doing well by this scripture, *“If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well,”* —James 2:8.

One thing that can be helpful in keeping these scriptures is what some call a litany. A litany can be a resonant or repetitive chant or a usually lengthy recitation or enumeration; for example, a litany can list complaints or praises. Too often, we wives can develop a litany of complaints. Why not try a litany of praise and love concerning our husbands?

What would a litany of praise and love contain? How about these for starters?

- ♥ I love my husband.
- † I praise you, Lord, for giving me my husband.

- ♥ I love his work-worn hands, which have labored for me for so many years.
- † I praise you, Lord, for providing him with a job.

Are You Serious About Marriage?

- ♥ I love to wash his soiled clothes, which were dirtied providing a living for me.
- † I praise you, Lord, for giving me a husband to provide for me.

- ♥ I love his (thinning, or grey?) hair, for it represents how long he has been with me!
- † I praise you, Lord, that he is still living and with me.

- ♥ I love to pick up after him, because after all, he is here with me, and I am not lonely.
- † I praise you, Lord, for his companionship.

- ♥ I love to clean the bathroom after him. In fact, I love to clean the whole house.
- † I praise you, Lord, for giving me a house to make a home for him.

- ♥ I love to cook for him and see him enjoy my dinner.
- † I praise you, Lord, for all the good food we have to eat.

- ♥ I love to watch him play with his children or grandchildren.
- † I praise you, Lord, for how much he loves them.

- ♥ I love to take a ride with him, even when I have so much to do.
- † I praise you, Lord, that he still wants to ride with me.

- ♥ I love his expanding middle, and do not mind that his looks have changed over the years.

Are You Serious About Marriage?

- † I praise you, Lord, that as I have grown older and no longer am a young bride, he doesn't seem to mind.
- ♥ I do love that he reads your Word and tries to follow you. For those married to an unbelieving spouse: I do love this man who is yet in darkness. He has chosen me to be his wife and is still with me.
- † I praise you, Lord, for the opportunity to prove my love to you by loving my husband.

Dear Lord,

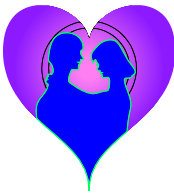
*Help me to see my dear husband as you see him.
Help me to love him as you would have me to love him.
Help me to have a heart of gratitude for all that I do
have, and forget what I do not have. Help me to keep
no accounts of grievances, and full stores of love and
forgiveness. Help me, dear Lord, to be perfect and
mature as you would have me to be because I love you
and I love my husband.*

Susan

Chapter IX

Does His Heart Trust Safely in Thee?

“The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil. She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life,” —Proverbs 31:11-12.



I just love these verses. We read so much about the Proverbs 31 woman detailing her perfunctory duties, but these two verses reveal the reason for them—her husband. Her dear husband is the reason for verses 13 through 31. She does nothing for her personal gain or to promote herself. She does everything for her husband so that he will have no need of spoil. “Spoil”—meaning to take from others or to plunder. She works very hard so he will have all that he needs. She lives her life for *him*. She will do him good all the days of her life.

I especially want to concentrate on verse 11, and the phrase, *“The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her.”* If I could have that epitaph engraved on my tombstone as a commentary of my service to my husband, I would be thrilled. As a young wife, I meditated often and long about what this verse entails. What does it mean in the day-to-day situations of married life? How does a husband’s heart trust in his wife? I pray that as we share a few thoughts concerning these

Are You Serious About Marriage?

verses, those who have been married for many years, and also those young married wives, will find blessing and encouragement to live out this verse.

A husband gives his heart to his wife. *“Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh,”* — Genesis 2:24. This dear woman who has his heart, and to whom he cleaves, is also the person in whom he expects to safely place his trust.

What is trust? According to *Miriam Webster*, it is an assured reliance on the character, ability, strength, or truth of someone or something. Wow! Our husbands want to rely safely upon us. *Is there any other*

way to rely, but safely? So we are to have enough character, ability, moral strength, and truthfulness to preserve that trust. Our husbands are counting on us for all these things. Let us consider the practical outworking of this concept in our daily lives.



Confidences

Our husbands should be able to have a private conversation with us, or confide in us their innermost thoughts and feelings, without fear that we would share those thoughts and feelings with other women, even our closest friends. A confidence is just that—it is a relation of trust and intimacy; it is a reliance on another’s discretion. This is one of our marital duties—to keep the confidences of our husbands. If we do not, with whom should we expect them to share their confidences?



Are You Serious About Marriage?

When a woman breaks her husband's confidence, and gossips to another woman about him, she betrays him. This makes her a traitor. A woman who does this has betrayed her husband's trust, and sinned against him and God. If her husband should ever find out her indiscretion, he will be sorely disappointed, and, most likely, will be afraid to confide in her in the future. Oh, how little some of us even know our husbands because they cannot trust us to share, or even know, what is on their hearts and minds!

Gossiping and Talebearing

A gossip is a person who habitually reveals personal or sensational facts about others, spends time in chatty talk, or gives reports of an intimate nature. No one likes to be the subject of gossip. "No one" includes each one of us.



How would a wife feel if, on her husband's coffee break, he gossiped about her? She would be appalled. A wife should never gossip about her husband again, not even to her closest friend. It stands to reason that when she is sharing gossip about her husband she is *not being a friend to him*.

Gossiping includes telling any details of the personal lives of others. Anything pertaining to the physical relationship or any other private details of a marriage should remain private between a husband and wife.

Any faults and sins of our husbands should remain between us, and not be discussed with friends. We all have sins and failings. It is not necessary to broadcast the failings of our closest friends to others. Many husbands have been humiliated by wives who have unnecessarily

Are You Serious About Marriage?

revealed their shortcomings to acquaintances in moments of self-pity or through sheer gossip. Often such damage is irreparable. Of course, this is done in the name of “sharing” with other women. The sad thing is that when the dear husband will have overcome these shortcomings, so many other women who were made privy to the past will not forget them.

Even if we should find ourselves momentarily full of self-pity and resentment toward our spouses, we need to hold our tongues. We will usually gain victory over our emotions, and make up with our husbands, but we can NEVER, NEVER get back those words we “shared” with another about our husbands. *“A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches, and loving favour rather than silver and gold,”* —Proverbs 22:1. So many women are guilty of destroying their own husband’s name in the eyes of others. I know it sounds harsh, but women who do this are often unknowing thieves who plunder and spoil their husband’s reputation. They steal their husband’s good name. But if they kept their silence, their husband’s name would not be destroyed for the fact that he is not yet perfect!

Why do we women think that verses about talebearing somehow do not pertain to what we say about our husbands?

“A talebearer revealeth secrets: but he that is of a faithful spirit concealeth the matter,” —Proverbs 11:13. She that has a faithful spirit concealeth the matter. Her husband’s heart can safely trust in her.

“The words of a talebearer are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly,” —Proverbs 18:8. Yes, even a wife’s talebearing causes

Are You Serious About Marriage?

deep wounds in the heart of her husband. The expression “stabbed in the back” describes a wound from someone trusted, as we tend to keep our enemies in front of us where we can watch them.

“He that goeth about as a talebearer revealeth secrets: therefore meddle not with him that flattereth with his lips,” — Proverbs 20:19. This should be a warning to all of us to stay away from women who tell marital details. We may feel flattered that they want to *tell us* about their personal lives, but soon the temptation would come for us to “share” in return. Always remember that with a gossip you will never share anything in confidence. You are effectively broadcasting it to everyone whom the gossip knows. Flee temptation. Probably this old adage still applies: “If you can’t say something nice, don’t say anything at all!”

We might add a word of caution here for young brides. When a woman marries, her loyalty is no longer to her parents, but to her new husband. A young woman should be careful not to gossip to her mother about any faults she discovers in her husband. Gossip is still gossip. This is not to say that she cannot share many a good thing with her mother. She should. She should work at strengthening the ties between her husband and her family. She should never seek sympathy from her mother regarding any problems in her marriage.

Another Facet of Talebearing

Another facet of this talebearing is to be careful that we are not bearers of tales to our husbands! We can repeat something we heard about a certain Mr. So-and-So, and our husbands may think poorly about that person.

Are You Serious About Marriage?

If we did not repeat the matter, our husbands would not be struggling with this unnecessary information.

Where to Find Counsel

One might rightly ask, “What is a woman to do if she needs counsel about problems she is experiencing in her marriage relationship?” God’s Word has the answer for this too.

“The aged women likewise, that they be in behaviour as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things; 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 2:3-5.

An older woman who has a godly life is the person God has given to counsel a young woman. Notice that it is to a woman, not a man, that one should go for help. It is to an older woman who has been married for many years, who has experienced the ups and downs of married life, who can best counsel a young wife. It is to a woman who, after all those ups and downs of life, is still focused on pleasing God and honoring her husband.

The older woman’s advice should reflect the Scriptures—teaching a woman how to love her husband and be a keeper at home in the best way, so that the young husband can safely trust in his wife. This older woman can keep a confidence, because her only interest in the younger woman is to help her more fully serve her God and love her husband. She has no desire to be a talebearer. What if a young woman cannot find an older woman? That’s easy too. She can pray to God to show her one. Sometimes it might be an older woman she

Are You Serious About Marriage?

knows personally; it might even be her mother, or God could give her a woman she has never met face to face through correspondence. God is able. Or it just might be that God Himself shall teach her what she needs to know. He is able!

Truthfulness

It is quite difficult, if not impossible, to place one's trust in someone who is not truthful. A wife should be truthful in *all* things. Any time her husband asks her a question about what she did or did not do, what the children did or did not do, or any requests for any type of information, she should answer truthfully, regardless of what she thinks his reaction might be. Outcomes are not her responsibility—being truthful is.

One facet of being truthful is refusing to hide anything from our husbands. We hear so often these days of women who shop too much and hide their purchases from their husbands. This is not being truthful. His heart cannot rest safely in a wife who is not honest about how she is spending his money.

This same facet would apply to how we spend our time. If we indulge in a day of laziness and do not accomplish our work by the time our dear husbands return home from work, we could be tempted to make up an excuse. However, it is better to be truthful and take responsibility for our actions.

We should also remember that exaggerating the truth or minimizing the truth *IS NOT THE TRUTH*. Our husbands cannot safely trust in us, and make the right and necessary decisions, if we give them inaccurate information!

Following Instructions

How can a husband safely trust in his wife when she does not follow his instructions or directions for how he would like things to be in his home? *“Even so must their wives be grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things,”* —1 Timothy 3:11. A faithful wife will see to it that the home is run well, according to her husband’s directives. Perhaps he does not want the children to watch videos all day; she will see to it that they do not.

“Most men will proclaim every one his own goodness: but a faithful man who can find?” —Proverbs 20:6. We can easily substitute the word “women” for the word “men” in this verse. Isn’t this just how most of us wives are? We proclaim our own goodness (usually meaning how hard we work), and our husbands just do not understand why we cannot get it all done. It must be their fault, at least in part. If we just had more time, more conveniences, more money, etc., our lives would be easier. The husband whose heart is safely trusting in his wife will find that she is a faithful woman who serves him well. She is not a complainer, promoting self, but rather a quiet faithful helper, working with what she has to accomplish the job.

The rest of Proverbs 31 details just how we should be diligently working, making use of every moment and every thing at our hand to be sure our husbands have no need for spoil.

Dear friends, as we close this article, we need to remember that regardless of how anyone has failed in the past, we can know that *“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness,”* —I John 1:9. We can humble

Are You Serious About Marriage?

ourselves and ask the forgiveness of our husbands, and can begin today to be that special kind of wife who carries the heart of her husband safely with her.

Susan

Chapter X

The Burden of Romance

The Bible really never speaks about romance, but we women seem to think it is a very necessary part of life, and that it is a vital part of a successful relationship. Most of us grew up with some type of literature that makes us aware of something called romance. Whether it was



classic English literature such as Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, or something more contemporary such as a Grace Livingston Hill novel, we became acquainted with the idea of Mr. Right striding into our lives and sweeping us off our feet like Cinderella, and carrying us off to Camelot to live "happily ever after."

Even today, everywhere we look, we see books advertised telling us how to put "romance back into our marriages." Marriage seminars are being promoted as "getaway weekends" to help married couples get back "in touch" with each other. Women are told to prepare candlelight dinners or have a regular date night. Men are reminded to "remember" Valentine's Day, Sweetest Day, Mother's Day, and so many more. "Say it with flowers," or "Say it with candy," are the slogans of the day, reminding the men in our lives to get with the

Are You Serious About Marriage?

thoughtful, romantic stuff!

This romance philosophy is so prevalent that if your marriage does not measure up to romantic standards, you might even think that there is something wrong with you, and certainly, that there must be something wrong with your husband. Before long you can find yourself believing that you are really missing out in life, and how easy it can become to harbor bitter, and even angry, thoughts about the man to whom you are married. You can begin to believe that you are being robbed of the delight and happiness which should come from that elusive romantic relationship that everyone should have.



How Do I Know This?

How do I know this? Because many years ago I was foolish enough to fall into this trap. And why not? Didn't I read "Christian" books that said God wanted me to have my fill of romance? May I share a personal story with you? I am married to a very good man. However, he is a very practical man, and practicality and romance often mix like oil and water. Of course, I had all the "necessary" starry-eyed dreams of my future life when I married him. However, *life* happens after the marriage ceremony. The babies, housework, and routines of wifedom and motherhood set in very shortly.

Occasionally, I would still find time to read a fanciful book, or an article by some "prominent" Christian stressing the importance of romance. I might even hear an occasional sermon on keeping the romance in

Are You Serious About Marriage?

a marriage. Romance surely seemed to be the key to a happy marriage according to the experts. So . . . I began to feel a little shortchanged by my husband. One day, about fifteen years into our marriage, we were riding in the car and he looked over at me and smiled and said, “I love you.” Well, the words just weren’t quite enough for me, so I went on a fishing expedition and asked him to expound on them. “Why do you love me?” Of course, I was hoping for a few really nice compliments, something to make me feel special. Big mistake! He thought for a minute or two while I awaited in eager expectation. He finally gave me what he considered to be his highest compliment. With a big smile he said, “Because, honey, you are just like an old shoe.”

“What?” I sputtered. “An old shoe! What kind of compliment is that?” I was fuming! I was upset! I was so hurt! How could he say such a thing? The poor guy meant it sincerely. He tried to explain why it was a compliment, but I was not in a mood to hear it. When I calmed down a little, enough to try to listen, he explained that being “an old shoe” was a very high compliment indeed. He went on to explain that old shoes are comfortable; they don’t pinch or cause blisters; they don’t rub you in the wrong way. They are an absolutely perfect fit. That was what I was like to him. Well, okay, I guess that was a compliment. The truth is, it does take a huge effort to ever get him to give up the remnants of what used to be a pair of shoes. I can laugh about it now. I am probably the only woman in the world to be called an “old shoe.”

As time went on, I just sadly became resigned to the lack of romance in my life, until one day my husband

Are You Serious About Marriage?

told me that all this romance nonsense was just that, nonsense. It wasn't biblical. Men were being forced to live up to some elusive image that fictional writers imagined and silly women believed. This nonsense was further compounded when leaders gave credence to it, preachers gave it their stamp of approval, and the Christian publishing houses spread it in order to get rich. Well, I've always believed my husband to be a little radical about practicality, but investigation usually proves him right in the end. He encouraged me to pray about it. I did. He was right! Let me share a few thoughts that the Lord has given me concerning romance in marriage.

What Is Romance?

What is romance? According to *Noah Webster's Dictionary*, a romance story is a narrative depicting heroic or marvelous achievements, colorful events or scenes, chivalrous devotion, unusual or even supernatural experiences, or other matters of a kind to appeal to the



imagination. Being “romantic” is described as being fanciful, unpractical, unrealistic, imbued with or dominated by idealism, a desire for adventure, chivalry, etc. It is characterized by a preoccupation with love, or by the idealizing of love or one's beloved. Actually, the list can continue, and could be quite lengthy.

We can see at a glance that this list certainly does not include any scriptural concepts. The Bible exhorts us to be sober, sincere, practical, realistic, moral, and

Are You Serious About Marriage?

obedient. The Bible commands men to love their wives, lead them, provide for them, and protect them. Nowhere in His Word does God instruct men to create romantic situations or cater to the fanciful illusions of their wives. If God does not think it necessary for men to be

When we are searching for romance, we are looking for something more than God has planned for us.

romantic, why do we? Do you think it is quite possible that Satan has deceived us once again? Isn't the truth really that those who teach us to seek romance in our marriages are actually, in the light of spiritual things, telling us to forsake the pursuit of biblical love in favor of more selfish gratification?

When we are searching for romance, we are looking for something more than God has planned for us. In searching for this elusive "something" called romance, we become discontent. Discontentment breeds a restlessness which causes us to look at our husbands with dissatisfaction. As said before, we may become bitter over what we perceive we are missing. Some may even go astray searching for forbidden relationships which might fill the imaginary gap in their lives.

Gimmicks

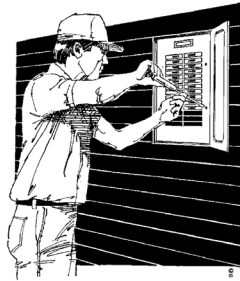
Have we ever stopped to think that Valentine's Day and Sweetheart Day are only gimmicks to encourage consumers to spend more unnecessary money? It's hard to imagine the patriarchs going to such lengths to romance their wives. Even romantic dinners at a quiet restaurant are something peculiar to our day and age. I confess to even being disgruntled with my husband for

Are You Serious About Marriage?

not remembering to purchase me a corsage to wear on Mother's Day or Easter Sunday like *all* (okay, a great many) of the rest of the women in my church. For a few years, I bought my own. Then I just gave up on it.

Setting My Husband Free

Well, I'm wandering here, but I want to say that when I finally realized that all this was a ploy of the devil to deceive me into finding fault with a perfectly good, honest, God-fearing, loving husband, I decided to trash the romance thing. I decided to free my husband of the burden of being romantic! I told him he was off the hook. He did not need to remember any more of these special feast days to romance me. He didn't even need to remember my birthday or anniversary. (After all, he never remembers his own.) He no longer needed to try to remember to do these things. I was happy and well pleased with him. After all, he was a kind and loving husband, just practical and a no-nonsense type of man. He fulfilled all of God's requirements for a husband, so why should I desire more than God? I asked him to forgive me for being such a foolish wife. He did. So I am content to be his "old shoe" and he is content with his "old shoe."



I can only ask you, dear ladies, if you, too, may have been deceived by the evil one. Do you sometimes wish for a more romantic relationship with your husband? Why not give it up and set him free from trying to live up to some fictional romantic hero? The next time you hear some radio preacher telling you how keep the

Are You Serious About Marriage?

romance in your marriage, turn him off. Burn your books on how to keep the romance burning in your marriage. Don't read another article on it. Instead, turn to your husband and thank God for him. He may be a plumber, electrician, computer programmer, teacher, or pastor. He may work sixty hours a week to provide a living. He may not have a romantic bone in his body. He probably doesn't, but he is a good man who, we hope, loves the Lord and loves you.

Romance has nothing to do with real, biblical love. Love is a commitment to obey God by keeping His two great commandments. Our husbands love us by going to work every day, by caring for us when we are sick, by bringing home their paychecks, by seeing that our physical needs are met. They are there day in and day out. There is nothing romantic about that, just something that our God prizes very highly—faithfulness. Why not be a blessing to your husband and set him free from the burden of romance? Perhaps he just might like an “old shoe” for his wife too.

Susan

Are You Serious About Marriage?

We Have Lived
And Loved Together

We have lived and loved together
Through many changing years;
We have shared each other's gladness
And wept each other's tears;
I have known ne'er a sorrow
That was long unsoothed by thee;
For thy smiles can make a summer
Where darkness else would be.

Like the leaves that fall around us
In Autumn's fading hours,
Are the traitor's smiles, that darken
When the cloud of sorrow lowers;
And though many such we've known, love,
Too prone, alas, to range,
We both can speak of one love
Which time can never change.

We have lived and loved together
Through many changing years;
We have shared each other's gladness
And wept each other's tears.
And let us hope the future
As the past has been will be:
I will share with thee my sorrow,
And thou thy joys with me.

Chapter XI

To Everything There Is a Season

So often a woman experiences unnecessary stress in her life because she does not realize she should not be doing *all* things in *every* season of her life. I just love the verses in Ecclesiastes chapter three which say, “*To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven: a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted; a time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up; a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance; a time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing; a time to get, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away; a time to rend, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak; a time to love, and a time to hate; a time of war, and a time of peace. What profit hath he that worketh in that wherein he laboureth? I have seen the travail, which God hath given to the sons of men to be exercised in it. He hath made every thing beautiful in his time: also he hath set the world in their heart, so that no man can find out the work that God maketh from the beginning to the end. I know that there is no good in*



Are You Serious About Marriage?

them, but for a man to rejoice, and to do good in his life. And also that every man should eat and drink, and enjoy the good of all his labour, it is the gift of God.” There is such simplicity and beauty in these verses. If only we would heed them instead of trying to do all things at the same time—if we would refrain from taking on more than God wants us to do—our lives could be much more peaceful and serene. We just might be able to enjoy the gift of God spoken of in these verses.

Her Preparation

Let's take a walk through a woman's life as God intended that it to be. God brings a new life into the world, a precious baby girl. She is lovingly nurtured and grows in knowledge, grace, and inner beauty. She plays house and mommy, and knows that one day she will be just like her mommy with a husband and home of her own. Her education and training prepare her for the important job of becoming a helpmeet to a godly young man. At the same time, she is learning and growing spiritually, striving to walk in the steps of her Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

In earlier centuries—in fact for six thousand years—girls were ready to assume this important job upon reaching puberty, the age at which God designed a female's body to change from that of a girl to that of a woman, in order that she might move to the next stage of life. Somehow, in our modern society, we have come up with a “better” schedule by which we force our young people to remain children far into their adult years. We often wonder why these young adults (teens) with no responsibility seem “silly” or “crazy.” We make our girls wait until they are at least eighteen to even

Are You Serious About Marriage?

think about embarking upon the life of the adult woman that they are supposed to be, and now the move is even toward twenty-two, or even later, to begin marriage and life's responsibilities.

In our own hearts and minds we may think, "Oh! Eighteen is just so young!" So young for what? To begin living and being what God intends for her? We may even sometimes be guilty of harboring thoughts that life is a hardship, and marriage should be delayed as long as possible. I wonder what God thinks about our ideas of avoiding His plan as long as possible?

Her Marriage

At whatever age a young lady marries, there is that wonderful sweet new beginning of two lives blending into one. This is a special time for a bride to really come to know her husband, to understand him, and to love him. She becomes devoted to keeping his home, cooking for him, and being there when he comes home from a hard day on the job.

Her Twenties

God gives at least nine months of time alone between a wife and her husband before the title and duties of motherhood are upon her. God usually blesses a mother with one child at a time because He knows that we learn and grow a little at a time into our roles of being mothers. This is all that a young woman should be doing: loving and serving her husband and welcoming each new child into her life.



Her life becomes busier and busier as each new

Are You Serious About Marriage?

child adds to the size of the family and the scope of her duties. This is definitely not the time for her to be leaving these little ones and her husband while trying to take on a home business, a job, or even a ministry at the church. Her ministries are her husband and her children. Perhaps she can take an occasional meal to another new mother, or watch a friend's children during a doctor's appointment, or offer a cup of cold water in some life that needs it. She can be a listener and an encourager. She can continue to be a loving daughter, and an integral part of both her family and her husband's family, as much as is reasonably possible. Her life is quite full by reason of these duties alone, and she will have all that she can do to perform fully and properly God's will for her life.

Her Thirties

The "thirty-something" years are busier than ever. The younger children are growing and the older ones are entering their teen years. A mother's children need every bit as much training, help, and counseling through these years as they did when they were little, likely much more. This is no time to hand them the latch key. Her husband still needs her also. She must always be on guard not to just allow her husband to quietly fade into the background of her life as she focuses on "important" duties. These years are still not the time to take on any additional commitments or jobs of any kind. A woman can continue to help her neighbors, provide meals for those who are sick, and encourage others in the Lord,



Are You Serious About Marriage?

but nothing should come between her and the many needs of her husband and children. This is what she is made for—ministering to her husband and family—being the helpmeet and mother that God created woman to be.

Her Forties

Soon the “forties” begin. Time and responsibilities do not slow down. Some children may already be marrying, some are still maturing, and there might even be small children in the home yet. The husband still has his needs for love, attention, and help in easing his load. The needs of the children continue to be as many as ever. As children grow older, they have more questions, encounter more situations, and require more guidance. The mother who thinks, “My children are old enough to be left alone now,” is sorely mistaken. They are old enough to be left alone when they are old enough to be on their own, yet so many of us attempt to hurry the one and forestall the other, trying to make two opposites out of the same issue, like trying to separate Siamese twins.

There is no child, who is still a child, that does not come home wishing that Mom would be there. Children with stay-at-home moms come in the door with the eager expectation of finding Mom there. Latchkey children enter sadly wishing Mom would be there, but disappointed at the prospect that she probably is not. There are still many needs on the home front at this time in life.

During these years a woman may also become a mother-in-law and a grandmother. Her role continues to change and her responsibilities continue to increase as her family begins to increase in size in a new way.

Are You Serious About Marriage?

Again, a woman must be careful of the time she gives to other activities, for life seems to go at a faster and faster pace. This is not the time to let down with rearing her children, including counseling grown ones, and being a good and loving wife to her husband.

Her Fifties

The “fifties” are upon a woman before she knows it. She sometimes may wonder how life sped by so fast. The children are nearly all married and the grandchildren are coming fast. She is turning grey and slowing down physically. She is beginning to realize that time (life) is on the downward trek, and sooner than she thought possible, she will be meeting her Lord and Saviour.



What is important during these years? A business? A beautiful home? Hardly. A godly woman still tends to hover over her children and grandchildren, praying earnestly for them to keep to the narrow way. She wants to be a blessing to them and minister in every way she can. This “fifty-something” woman still realizes that her husband has needs and strives to meet them. Perhaps in the recesses of her mind, she realizes that a heart attack or illness could strike at any time. She begins to treasure what time they are allowed to still be together.

Why start her own business at this point, or take on additional responsibilities, which will call her away from her family? If there is free time, it can be spent comforting the bereaved, or encouraging younger mothers, and teaching them many of the things that she has learned over the years about being a godly helpmeet

Are You Serious About Marriage?

and mother. She can now begin to speak from her “age” about marriage, rearing children, and the Christian walk. After all, she has been married for thirty years, and her children are maturing enough to know that they can use help.

Her Sixties

In the “sixties,” rearing of children may be over, but discipling one’s grown children continues to be a challenge, as well as striving to have a godly influence on one’s grandchildren. Oh, yes, and her husband is still there. He still loves her and is her best friend. She still gives him top priority in her life. A woman should be winding down her physical life, but not her spiritual. She continues to grow spiritually and is really beginning to know the Lord well after a lifetime of walking with Him. She is able to offer sound biblical counsel to others younger than herself. She is able to sort out the trivial from the important. She has had disappointments and regrets, and she can share from her failures as much as from her successes.



Her Seventies

The seventies and beyond are a gift of time and life from God. A believing woman is quietly encouraging all those around her while awaiting the call home from her heavenly Father.

A Woman’s Life

There are many things which could be said about a woman’s life. The evil one desires to sift us as wheat and keep us too busy to have time to ponder where our

Are You Serious About Marriage?

lives are heading until it is too late. He works very hard to spin us around, turn us upside down, and reverse our lives from God's perfect order. How so? He, the evil one, would like to see us reverse our roles with men by becoming financial providers for our families. He inspires younger women to leave their homes in pursuit of becoming women of "reputation" or "career" by having them seek to be speakers, leaders, and teachers of others. The evil one loves to keep us immersed in the things of this physical life, while we are actually heading for eternity.

Pressure is put upon women, in the name of religion to be serving and ministering, quite often to the neglect of their marriages and families. Others insist that a woman should be the perfect "keeper at home," canning every vegetable under the sun, sewing every item of clothing, and wearing herself down trying to accomplish every outward vestige of homemaking *par excellence*. Others strive to be the perfect mother, rearing perfect children, and are completely stressed out by being imperfect and having imperfect children! Life has become so reversed that we cry out in anguish, "Where is the *gift of God?*"—*"I know that there is no good in them, but for a man to rejoice, and to do good in his life. And also that every man should eat and drink, and enjoy the good of all his labour, it is the gift of God,"* —Ecclesiastes 3:12.

Why are we in a mad race to finish first, to do the best, and to have the most? God does not ask us to "do it all" or to "be the best." He does not ask us to have home businesses, homestead, head up ministries, be authorities, or even be known as good Christians. He asks us to love Him and keep His Word. He asks us to

Are You Serious About Marriage?

love our husbands, be helpmeets, rear our children, and do good in life. We are to enjoy the fruit of our labor. It is the gift of God.

I guess if I could just speak from my heart to all the women reading this, from my vantage point of being in my sixties, I would say to let go of all the unnecessary busyness (especially *anything* outside the home), and treasure the quiet of your family life. To those who are so busy that you just can't seem to spend time in the home, I would say, "Quit it all." You will never regret being the wife of a happy and contented husband, or the mother of children who are well-trained and happy. To those who are so busy staying at home because of self-imposed to-do lists that you still don't have time to enjoy being a wife and mother, shorten your lists. God is not going to ask you how many committees you served on or how many quarts of beans you canned. He is going to ask you how your spiritual life was. Did you love Him? Did you love your husband? Did you love your children? Did you finish your job?

Mistakes Women Make

Many women make the mistake of always looking forward to future seasons of life, or looking back on past seasons. One of the keys to contentment is to enjoy the *present* season of life. Another mistake is to want to do more than is needed. The world seems to brand us as useless if we do nothing more than be wives and mothers. Nothing more? Who is the woman who has fully accomplished this?

It is a sad thing that, often, even the church brands women as useless if they remain in the home instead of being active in the activities of the church. This should

Are You Serious About Marriage?

not be so. Men are to be the leaders and activists in the church. Women should be quietly helping their men to serve the Lord. The Titus 2 verses never espouse a public ministry, but rather a personal, one-on-one type of ministry. An older woman teaching a younger one how to love her husband, teach her children, and be a good wife, is what God ordained. I think we women sometimes are enticed by the evil one to leave our calling by our lust to travel and teach other women. We say we want to help others, but all too often the ones we are supposed to help, our husbands and children, are left behind while we are making names for ourselves as helpers of others. This is a deception. We need to take care of those whom God has given to us as our own personal ministry. If, and when, we finish that job, God will send to us others that we can help.

We must also realize that a woman whose children have left home has more time for outside ministering than one who has children in the home. We must let the Lord lead us in what we do for others, which will be individually based instead of dictated by a man-made standard of what Christian women should be doing.

The Gift of God

Dear friends, enjoy the seasons of life. They are a gift of God. Let us simplify our lives by doing what God has called us to do—being wives and mothers. As the Lord leads, let us reach out in love to the needy and poor around us, encouraging others, and showing the marvelous salvation of our God in the Lord Jesus Christ. Our life is a short walk on an ever-changing path to eternity. We are constantly moving. Sometimes conditions are better, and sometimes worse. Sometimes

Are You Serious About Marriage?

things are easy, and sometimes things are tough. We are traveling through mountains and valleys with changing seasons until, at last, we meet Him. The things of this earth will grow strangely dim when we look into the light of His glorious face. *“Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls,”* —Jeremiah 6:16. Yes, let us return to His paths of being wives and mothers, keeping our homes, enjoying the seasons of our lives, and finding rest.

Susan

Chapter XII

Absolute Obedience to Whom?

The following is written by my husband, Jeff Zakula. It is a portion of a much larger article on obedience and loyalty to God or man. The complete article, "Of Loyalty and Lost Vision," is available as a reprint. It may be ordered from Keepers of the Faith.

Jesus Did Not Redeem Us to Follow a Leader

Jesus did not redeem us to a follow-the-leader syndrome. He redeemed us to follow *His* lead, and we may follow along with anyone who is willing to follow His lead. We are expressly forbidden to follow those who are straying from His lead, regardless of their great sincerity or wonderful intentions. Remember, the blind lead the blind and both fall into the ditch. At the bottom of the ditch, the sincerity of him whom we followed to get there will not help us much. When people trust sincerity rather than truth, they do it to their own harm. And if it is not truth, how often is it really sincere? One of the greatest assets to the con man is the believability of his sincerity in telling someone something that just sounds like it could be right. 1 Thessalonians 5:21 tells us, "*Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.*" If we prove all things and hold fast to only that which is good, then it stands to reason that we also must decide what is not good, and pitch it out. "*Beloved, believe*

Are You Serious About Marriage?

not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world,” —I John 4:1.

The terms and philosophies of which we have been speaking are not only a problem among larger groups in society, such as denominations and churches. There are those who are using them to drill down into the basic unit of society, the family, to plant the seeds of automated followship, where they may eventually yield even more evil results. There is a movement afoot to reduce the life and Christianity of a woman to a blind, mechanical submission to the good or evil whims of her husband. Now, there is a biblical command pertaining to the accountability of a wife to a husband. However, it has been, as often as not, taken to an extreme, and indeed become, in many cases, almost the inverse of what Scripture teaches.



Please, do not accuse me of saying that women should not obey their husbands. Anyone who knows the tenor of our writings knows that such is not the case. What I am saying is that a woman is to obey her husband *in the Lord* as the Scripture teaches. The problem is that the word “obey,” and more still, the words “absolute obedience,” are frequently becoming tools used to intimidate sincere women into becoming automatons. A Christian cannot be a robot, and a robot cannot be a Christian. Jesus told the woman at the well, *“God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in*

Are You Serious About Marriage?

spirit and in truth,” —John 4:24. Is it not interesting that Jesus chose a woman for this conversation? Remember, God never does anything by accident.

We must never shift from the spirit of the law to the letter. In trying to legislate the walk of the wife, rather than allowing her, as a Christian, to be obedient to the Spirit of God, we will wind up misusing the principles of marriage that God gave us. We must be careful that we do not take something that God established for our own good, and harm ourselves with it by exercising it outside the context within which God created it. God gave us fire to stay warm. A fire in the stove will accomplish that purpose. Should we build a fire in our beds, we will have used what God has given us unwisely and to our own hurt.

God Is a God of Individuals

God is a God of individuals. He works in the life of each individual. He alone creates the spiritual walk of the individual. No other person can legislate a more spiritual walk for that individual, even with or through Bible principles. No marriage is perfect—none. A marriage between two real believers, who are truly growing and seeking to please Jesus, individually, will automatically, by default, continue to grow toward being what the Bible teaches as marriage. Dedicated believers, however imperfect, cannot do otherwise, because God will guide the process, but no amount of forced obedience or demanded submission, either by the husband directly, or by wielding a doctrine like a club, will ever accomplish the same thing.

Knowing that Scripture designates the man as the protector and guide of the family is enough for a believing

Are You Serious About Marriage?

woman. She can then fill her role as helpmeet as God intended. Anything beyond this, such as absolutism or over-dependence, develops pride and false security, both on the part of the man and of the woman.

As Christians, we do not need doctrines that demand that women do not think, or that make them proud of the fact that they do not think. 1 Timothy 2:14 says, “*And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression.*” Notice that the woman was not deceived because she could not think or should not think. She simply made a wrong decision. Adam could have helped her make a right one, because, in this particular case, he was not fooled. That is why this passage teaches that women should not teach men and make doctrine in the church. However, Eve could still have chosen to sin had she wanted, and it should be duly noted that Adam chose knowingly to sin. So, though men are sometimes harder to fool, they are definitely not to be blindly trusted. Also, a woman is not fooled by every temptation. So, to take away her right to obey God and eschew evil is spiritually criminal. This is being done in real-life situations, in countless ways, daily across this nation by men who call themselves Christians.

When a man prefers sin and induces others to sin, he is not to be viewed as a Christian, no matter how adamantly he asserts otherwise.

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Are You Serious About Marriage?

“Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven,” —Matthew 7:21. It is simply one more doctrine of blindness that requires that we accept the word of someone who claims Christianity regardless of his spiritual fruits. Jesus said in Matthew 7:20: *“Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them,”*—not by their claims. This doctrine of blindness, that we cannot determine these fruits, itself, has caused the downfall of many. According to God’s Word, even when a woman sees evil, she has the right and the obligation to avoid it.

For instance, take the “Christian” man who, claiming the “authority found in Scripture,” commanded his wife to join a wife-swapping group with him. The absolutely astonishing part is that her “Christian” friends and fellow church-goers advised her that God wanted her to obey. They even held a Bible study to try to convince her. Needless to say, they did not likely come across 1 Corinthians 7:2, which says, *“Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband.”*

Thankfully, this woman realized that God created woman, just as he did man, with an intellect, not as an animal, in order that she might discern right from wrong, when it becomes completely obvious. Fortunately, the woman in this instance obeyed God. It is not difficult, even for a woman, to understand the words *“Let every woman have her own husband.”* These words completely disclaim any authority of her husband in this issue. Her obligation is strictly to God.

Some groups raise significant ballyhoo about the

Are You Serious About Marriage?

fact that a woman must remain within the divine order of woman under man under Christ. I am certainly one hundred percent in favor of that idea. What I cannot understand is why the people who make the most noise about it do not believe it. When the man refuses to follow Jesus, and departs from the divine order, why would someone think that the woman should depart from following Christ also? After all, he who follows not Christ follows Satan. Why suggest that the woman leave the divine order of

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following Christ and follow Satan also? The people who write books advocating such ideas always shrewdly avoid passages like Proverbs 4:14, which says, “*Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men.*” What is the example of Jesus that we are to follow? 1 Peter 2:21-22 says, “*For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: who did no sin.*” [emphasis added]

Unfortunately, this woman’s experience is by no means an isolated case of this type of misuse of God’s principles for marriage. I, sadly, have seen “Christian” men treat their wives literally abusively right in my very presence. I have sat there embarrassed for their wives, and ashamed of their husbands regarding their behavior

Are You Serious About Marriage?

that they proudly believe shows that they exercise “headship” and keep their wives in submission. 1 Peter 3:7 says, *“Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered.”*

This theory of absolutism leads men to think that they have some sort of right to be demanding and egocentric. Although Scripture teaches that men are to always act worthy of the position of headship in their families, it never teaches them to lord it over their wives. Jesus is our example. Was Jesus demanding? He said that He came as a servant. Should not the husband, then, consider himself a servant? If Jesus came as a servant to us, His bride, how then should a husband treat his bride? Yes, a godly husband will set physical guidelines for the keeping of his home, which his wife should follow, but he will, like Jesus, never be demanding or expect to be treated like a king. This is not to say that the wife should not treat him as a king, but men, you know as well as I do that God never commanded us to be boors, or to set ourselves up as testing mechanisms for the trying of our wives’ faith.

Another example of the perversion of followship is the preacher who, when asked after several affairs why he did not step down, simply said, “God has called me to this position. It does not matter that I have a weakness for women.” Of course, he obviously has not opened his Bible and read the qualifications for the position to



Are You Serious About Marriage?

which he claims God called him. 1 Timothy 3:2 says: “*A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach.*” God does not call people without the proper spiritual qualifications. On how many counts does he flunk in just one verse? Also, in exactly what measure is a biblically submissive wife supposed to follow his perverted leadership?

My next question, though, is even simpler. Why does he need to step down? Why are there people following him? This man has not only removed himself from God’s divine order, he has removed himself from any fellowship with God’s family if that family is obeying God’s Word. “*And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you. . . In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, to deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus,*” —1 Corinthians 5:2-5.

If no one followed, this man would not even need to step down. It is accountability to man that keeps him there. Again, it is legislation over others that is the problem. No one can legislate or demand anything that will fix this problem. The answer is for each godly individual

There is a crying need for individuals to take the time to discern faithfulness to God and His principles from loyalty to man (or denomination) and his principles.

Are You Serious About Marriage?

to decide to walk away and not follow, believe, or associate with evil. There is a crying need for individuals to take the time to discern faithfulness to God and His principles from loyalty to man (or denomination) and his principles.

Identifying the Thread of Truth

These are serious problems. Rather than sewing together a conglomeration of indiscriminate verses into a doctrine, let's try to identify that thread of truth on this subject that runs throughout God's Word. That thread, the truth itself, will be common to all passages in the Bible, not just a few. It may come as a surprise to some that God's Word indicates that the woman is not *ultimately* accountable to the man. She is accountable to God. In fact, we will find that thread *is* woman's accountability to God. Each of us, including women (they are not some sort of second-class citizens in God's eyes), are accountable directly to God. "So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God," —Romans 14:12. They are to obey, submit, and be helpmeets to their husbands—not for their husbands, but for Jesus Christ, Who redeemed them, and gave them that job to do for *Him*.



The biblical concept here is that wives have a different job, *not a different boss*. We read in Revelation 1:5-6, "And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us

Are You Serious About Marriage?

kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever.” He hath made us kings and priests. Who are us? Us are not men. Us are believers. So, women are also kings and priests unto God. They simply are such within their own God-given occupation, which is different from that of a man. They serve the same Master, and the woman serves her husband only in obedience to Him. “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus,” —Galatians 3:28. [emphasis added]

The Two Great Commandments

Jesus said the two great commandments envelop the entire ten, and they are as follows:

“Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself,” —Matthew 22:37-39.

I	VI
II	VII
III	VIII
IV	IX
V	X

There is no such thing as obedience outside of obedience to God. Nothing involving man ever comes before God. Let’s not try to fool ourselves or God. The first commandment is still the first commandment, and the second commandment is still second. “Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting,” —Galatians 6:7-8. We will reap of the disobedience that we sow to God when we obey flesh

Are You Serious About Marriage?

instead of spirit. We cannot sin in obedience to God.

The idea that a woman should be in absolute obedience to a man, even to the point of sin, has received widespread promotion lately. It is difficult to understand how people who claim to know Scripture can give any credence at all to such a notion. It runs entirely contrary to the rest of the Word. Nowhere does the Bible even intimate that if a woman is tempted by a man to sin, she should actually commit sin, God actually wants her to sin, God is ordering her to sin, God is tempting her through the man to sin, or her act of sin will be imputed to someone else, or God will disregard His commandments and bless the woman for committing sin.

These notions are entirely false, and none could even be considered in the wildest imaginations without the false doctrine of absolute obedience of the woman to the man. Listen to what James has to say about God's position on the subject: *"Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him. Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: but every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death. Do not err, my beloved brethren. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of*

Are You Serious About Marriage?

his creatures,” —James 1:12-18.

Some would even defend the idea of the wife blamelessly sinning on the man’s command with the rationale that, since we worship in spirit and truth, our physical actions, or the sins that we commit in the body, are irrelevant. However, Paul shows us in 1 Thessalonians 5:22-23 that this is not the case as he says, “*Abstain from all appearance of evil. And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.*”

The Ephesians 5 Passage



The concept of absolute obedience of a woman to a man in *all* things is just not borne out in Scripture, not even the Scriptures used by its proponents to promote it. Now, let’s simply start with the favorite verse of the naysayers and see where that leads us. “*Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing,*” —Ephesians 5:24. However, before we pluck this verse completely out of context, as is often wont to be done, we should back up to the beginning of the passage and discern what Paul is saying. Starting at Ephesians 5:21: “*Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God,*” we see that Paul is addressing the entire body of believers at Ephesus here. The next verse, Ephesians 5:22, says: “*Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.*” Please take note that the submission expressed for wives here is the exact same word as the submission of all church members to each other. So, the submission that Paul

Are You Serious About Marriage?

prescribes for wives unto their own husbands is the same submission prescribed for every church member to submit to every other church member. Paul is basically saying, as he did in Philippians 2:4: “*Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.*” In other words, be sure to submit one’s own desires to the needs of others. There is, as yet, no blind obedience indicated. Wives are to perform this submission to “their own husbands” because it is not healthy for them to be looking upon the things of other men. Why else would Paul find it necessary to mention both concepts together?

The next verse, Ephesians 5:23: “*For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body,*” really begins to put the passage in perspective. Paul draws an analogy between the Christ-church relationship and the husband-wife relationship. He is most careful, though, to be very specific that his comments on the husband-wife relationship pertain strictly to physical things. Just as Jesus is the spiritual protector of the believer, the man is the physical protector of the woman.

“*Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing,*” —Ephesians 5:24. If we now look at the verse in light of its context, some things become very apparent. We can see that when Paul says that wives are to be subject to their husbands in everything, he means everything pertaining to the husband’s physical protectorship. How can we see that? This is the second time in two verses that Paul makes this specific delineation. He says that the church is subject directly to Christ. *Are not wives*

Are You Serious About Marriage?

who are believers members of the church?

Looking at 1 Peter 3:7 again, it says, *“Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered.”* The words *“being heirs together”* give wives an equal believership, and they will give an account of themselves to God accordingly. In the next part, though it is an exhortation and example to husbands, look at Paul’s warning in the last six words. He is saying that marriage can be used as a physical picture of the spiritual relationship between Christ and the church, and that, though we are sinful men, we should strive toward the example set by Jesus toward His church. However, he makes it quite clear that he is speaking of that great mystery, that spiritual relationship, not of the man and woman.

“Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; 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. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church: 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. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church,”
—Ephesians 5:25-32. Even though it is not a picture of

Are You Serious About Marriage?

the man and wife, he adds, *“Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband,”* — Ephesians 5:33.

So, yes, he who is the physical protector of the wife is most certainly worthy of her reverence for that reason, even if he is not a believer. Before we move to the reverence and submission that she is to have, though, we should stop and look at some Scriptures involving the believing wife and the unbelieving husband that are so often sadly abused also.

A Believing Woman and an Unbelieving Man

How obedient is the believing woman to be to the unbelieving man? Well, as a starting point, we must first, once again, return to the two great commandments, which say to love and obey God first and to love man next. We will find in the Scriptures pertaining to marriage that God not only does not depart from His commandments, but, as always in Scripture, reinforces them all the more.

Again, it is important to realize the context of a passage. In 1 Corinthians Chapter 7 Paul is writing to believers. As we read, we realize that he then addresses particular groups of believers. 1 Corinthians 7:10-11 says, *“And unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord, Let not the wife depart from her husband: but and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband: and let not the husband put away his wife.”* Who are the married? They are the married believers to whom the epistle is addressed. So God, not Paul, commands the believing husband and wife to stay together because there is certainly no reason

Are You Serious About Marriage?

to do otherwise.

Whom does Paul address next, though? *“But to the rest speak I, not the Lord: If any brother hath a wife that believeth not, and she be pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away. And the woman which hath an husband that believeth not, and if he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him. For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy,”* —1 Corinthians 7:12-14.

Notice that Paul now says that is not a commandment of the Lord, but he recommends it as the best way to handle the situation. He says if the unbelieving husband be *pleased* to dwell with a believing wife who follows her Lord in all things that she should stay with him. Why should she stay with him? She should stay so that he might be sanctified, but only if he is pleased to be sanctified.

Why does Paul encourage staying if the unbeliever is pleased with the life of a believer? 1 Corinthians 7:16-17 says, *“For what knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband? or how knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save thy wife? But as God hath distributed to every man, as the Lord hath called every one, so let him walk. And so ordain I in all churches.”* If the husband is not displeased for the wife to walk as the Lord has called her, then who knows but that he might also decide to be pleased to become a believer?

However, if the unbeliever is not pleased with the walk of the believer, 1 Corinthians 7:15 says, *“But if the unbelieving depart, let him depart. A brother or a sister*

Are You Serious About Marriage?

is not under bondage in such cases: but God hath called us to peace.” Is a believing woman called into bondage of obedience to an unbeliever unto sin in order to please him? 1 Peter 3:1-2 tells us, “Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives; while they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear.”

Notice that it requires not sinful conversation, but chaste conversation, to win the unbeliever.

Notice that it requires not sinful conversation, but chaste conversation, to win the unbeliever. Is the believing wife required to spend twenty-four hours per day with someone who is displeased with Christianity and is devoted to being a stumbling block and temptation to her until she falls? I leave that to each individual to decide before the Lord, yet I will note that Paul only said that he thought it would be a good idea to stay if the unbeliever was pleased with the walk of the believer and showed signs of accepting Christ through the godly behavior of the wife; he also made it clear that it might be a good idea, not a commandment. He simply states that if the partners do separate physically, they should not seek to marry again.

Lately, there has been some circulation of a very harmful philosophy that if a believing wife is married to a man who wants her to dress immodestly and go to bars with him, she should do so to win him to Christ. In fact, this very situation is often given as an example, and women have been counseled by people

Are You Serious About Marriage?

who do not understand Scripture to behave in just such a foolish manner. The idea here is supposed to be that by desecrating the Christ that she loves, the woman will please the reprobate, and win him to the Christ that she is desecrating. If people would stop plucking Paul's words out of context, and read the whole Bible, such an idea would never be an issue.

Jesus addressed it quite fully. In Matthew 6:24 He said, "*No man can serve two masters.*" Guess what? No woman can serve two masters either. She cannot serve God and sin. Jesus pressed this point even further in Matthew 7:18 when He said, "*A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.*" A woman will stand before God on the fruit that she brings forth, and let us not forget that "*Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire,*" —Matthew 7:19. Hold on! What about the husband? He is to blame, isn't he? It hardly seems likely. Jesus did not say anywhere that the tree next door would be hewn down and cast into the fire.

The Divine Order

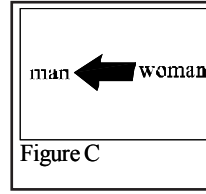
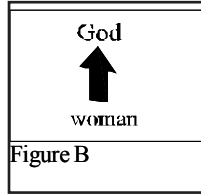
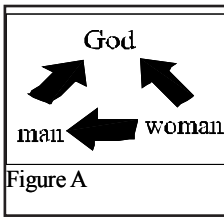
Once again, it all comes back to God's *divine* order. It is a divine order only as it follows God. Therefore, if a man chooses to remove himself from it through sin or through choice, the woman is certainly not obligated to follow his lead. The following figures may help to portray the situation a little more clearly. Figure A shows things as they should be—the man and woman rightly related to God and each other.

Figures B and C depict the two avenues of pursuit available to the woman if the man insists on removing

Are You Serious About Marriage?

himself and his family from any relationship with God. As you can see, Figure B is the only safe choice.

Now—knowing that sometimes a woman can flaunt her religion and sorely displease her partner with a walk that is religious, but certainly not godly, nor even



kind—it is not possible to advocate specific grounds on which a woman should leave a man. A woman has many ways that she can reverence her husband as her lord and protector in the flesh without compromising her Christianity. We cannot presume to decide such a matter for another. Nor should we be so presumptuous as to dictate to someone, without any scriptural backing, that she is bonded night and day to an abusive husband who may destroy her and her Christian life. We are not empowered to demand that others sacrifice themselves spiritually on the altar of our beliefs, and some of us will answer to God for this abuse of others when we face the Lord. The woman is neither the chattel nor the child of the man. To relegate a woman to obedience based on such a mindless stature seems, ironically, borne of the same mindset that would absolve Nazi war criminals for mindlessly obeying orders during the Holocaust.

Maybe now we have laid enough ground work to look at a couple of oft-misinterpreted verses one more time.

Are You Serious About Marriage?

“Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. . . Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing,” —Ephesians 5:22-24. The general thrust of God’s Word should make it obvious that the words *“submit yourselves to your own husbands”* and *“let the wives be [subject] to their husbands in everything”* cannot be separated from the words *“as unto the Lord”* and *“subject unto Christ.”* After all, why do we think that God and Paul go to all the trouble to make sure those qualifiers are in such passages?

Speaking of such qualifiers, we might also notice that Ephesians 6:1, even in speaking to children, says, *“Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right.”* We should notice the words *“in the Lord.”* Though I make no case for young children disputing doctrine with godly parents, when children reach the age of reason and become believers, they have a responsibility to the Lord, if propositioned to sin by an adult—any adult—to make every effort not to comply with that sin. They would be expected to do no less for any other sin.

A Pattern Emerging

Is there a pattern emerging here? Are we beginning to feel that if we pay close attention to all the words in a verse, and all the verses in a passage, and sometimes a few other passages on the topic, God gives light to obey Him in spirit and in truth? Are we seeing that we might well not be bound to someone’s list of rules on the left side of the path, or to someone else’s list of rules on the right? Joshua said, *“As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD,”* —Joshua 24:15. How many of our

Are You Serious About Marriage?

households are slowly becoming governed by lists and procedures that we pick up here and there from sincere individuals, rather than serving the Lord? Whether by well-meaning individuals or not, a verse is taken out of context here and a few words ignored there; and soon we have a stack of verses that really comprise nothing but a patchwork quilt of contextual discrepancies, but nonetheless—*Voilà!* A doctrine is born!

Loyalty to man and the absolute obedience of the woman are bookends of such a doctrine. This “loyalty to man” doctrine is one of the most subtle attempts of the New Agers to infiltrate the ranks of those who see themselves as Christians with conservative views. It falls into that group of cunning insinuations that yet have a “ring of truth” that are so often used in cult theologies. Though no one could suggest anything better than to flee from the nonsensical feminist attitude of women in many of our churches today, we want to flee to the middle of the narrow path, not fling ourselves off the other side. And though this doctrine comes to us often borne on the tender hearts of angels of light (*“And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light,”* —2 Corinthians 11:14), for a woman to be taught to subvert the commandment of God to the whim of man is nothing more than a sly substitution of “loyalty to the prince” for “faithfulness to God.” It is a subtle form of the age-old, new-age doctrine of the elevation of man to the level of God.

One certainly must give them credit for a brilliant end-run or sneak attack hiding behind the roles of the husband and wife to get the job done. By saying that the wife must obey the husband in everything, even sin, and

Are You Serious About Marriage?

making it sound believable with misinterpreted Scripture, they would have us believe that the commandments of God are suddenly less important than the whims of men.

Abraham, Sarah, and Abimelech

When it comes to the husband asking the wife to sin, the red flags should go up immediately. So we may as well stop here and examine the one event in the Bible to which all promoters of blind obedience point as an example. *“But Abimelech had not come near her: and he said, Lord, wilt thou slay also a righteous nation? Said he not unto me, She is my sister? and she, even she herself said, He is my brother: in the integrity of my heart and innocency of my hands have I done this. And God said unto him in a dream, Yea, I know that thou didst this in the integrity of thy heart; for I also withheld thee from sinning against me: therefore suffered I thee not to touch her;”* —Genesis 20:4-6.

Yes, Sarah lied for Abraham. The question is, “Did God bless her for it?” We can only make that assumption if we can find Scripture to agree. However, if we will read the passage, paying attention to exactly what it says, we will find the answer to that and a number of other related questions.

Remember, we are trying to steer away from notions concocted by just grabbing a verse here and another there, and find the common thread that already connects them. If we just grab them and cobble them together ourselves, we can make the Bible say anything—anything. So, before we make up the reason that God preserved Sarah for Abraham, let’s reconnoiter in the Word a bit and see if God already gave us a reason. Eureka! *“And he [God] said, I will certainly return*

Are You Serious About Marriage?

unto thee according to the time of life; and, lo, Sarah thy wife shall have a son. And Sarah heard it in the tent door, which was behind him. Now Abraham and Sarah were old and well stricken in age; and it ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women. Therefore Sarah laughed within herself, saying, After I am waxed old shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also? And the LORD said unto Abraham, Wherefore did Sarah laugh, saying, Shall I of a surety bear a child, which am old? Is any thing too hard for the LORD? At the time appointed I will return unto thee, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son,” —Genesis 18:10-14. God made a promise to Abraham and Sarah, and though they did not believe Him, or they would not have so soon acted so cowardly, He had no intention of going back on His word.

Thus, the innocent bystander here is Abimelech. He acted in integrity and innocency, and God not only affirms that fact, but exonerates him from any wrongdoing. Notice the words of God to Abimelech, “therefore suffered I thee not to touch her.” Therefore, in God’s own words, He protected not Sarah, but Abimelech. He says that He did this because of Abimelech’s integrity. Do we find God’s Word describing Abraham as showing integrity in lying? Scripture seems to be ostensibly silent about it.

But wait! Certainly God will exonerate Sarah for lying for Abraham because she simply obeyed her husband. But no. Actually, if we read on just a few more verses, we find quite the contrary. “*And unto Sarah he said, Behold, I have given thy brother a thousand pieces of silver: behold, he is to thee a covering of the eyes, unto*

Are You Serious About Marriage?

all that are with thee, and with all other: thus she was reprov'd,” —Genesis 20:16. Notice the words “thus she was reprov'd.” They are not uttered by Abimelech. The words are a commentary added by God Himself. Why does God say that Sarah stood reprov'd and so many people still insist that she did nothing wrong? God does not recommend reproof for sterling behavior. There is no glory, and there is no blessing, and there is no one to take the blame for a woman who does wrong.

Calling Abraham Lord

While we are here, let us clear up another misconception. Peter said in 1 Peter 3:6, “*Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord.*” Why is it that people keep insinuating that this is somehow related to, or somehow absolves her of, doing wrong in the situation involving Abimelech? We will find no mention of Sarah calling Abraham lord in the passage concerning Abimelech. “*Therefore Sarah laughed within herself, saying, After I am waxed old shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?*” —Genesis 18:12. So, Sarah called her husband lord. It is something that happened. It had nothing to do with Abimelech. Does it make Sarah’s lie respectable? Is it enough to build a doctrine of obedience unto blindness?

1 Timothy 2 Passage

There is one more straggling tentacle of this doctrine that seeks to turn wives into robots. It is the idea that wives should live in silence, and never suggest or explain anything to the men that they are assigned by God to help. Of course, this notion is hung on a passage of Scripture, but what does the passage really

Are You Serious About Marriage?

say, and what does the rest of Scripture say? *“Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence. For Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression,”* —1 Timothy 2:11-14.

If we just pluck these verses out of the passage, we might make a case for this notion of total silence. However, it would be of considerable value for us to at least know what Paul is talking about here so that we can put his comments in perspective, and thus determine what they mean. If we back up to the first verse in the chapter, 1 Timothy 2:1, we read *“I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men.”* We can see that Paul is speaking in generalities about practices that should take place in the churches. This is important to understanding other statements made in this passage.

We read a little further to 1 Timothy 2:8-11 which says, *“I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting. In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; but (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works. Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection.”* We know that Paul is speaking here of public behavior, most likely public behavior in the church, and not of men and women in the privacy of their homes. How? First, if the men lift up their hands to pray everywhere, everywhere includes a number of

Are You Serious About Marriage?

places beyond the privacy of one's home. Second, for a woman to profess something with the way that she dresses, someone will have to see her, and that would not only be her husband for whom she must dress modestly because *“Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge,”* —Hebrews 13:4.

So teaching in public would be usurping the man's authority, because he is appointed by God to be the spokesman; and the wife should never steal that position, especially in the dispensing of doctrine, because as the passage says she is the one more easily misled by purveyors of doctrines. Also, Paul addressed the very same topic on other occasions, such as 1 Corinthians 14:34, when he said, *“Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law.”*

Does this mean, though, that a woman can never advise a man in their private relationship? This passage obviously does not address that situation, but there may be a few other passages that shed some light on that subject. Some people would say that such an idea is established by 1 Peter 3:5-6, *“For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands: even as Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose daughters ye are, as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement.”* Something does not quite fit, though. The subjection mentioned here is a long way from the idea of total silence, as we shall see from Scripture in a moment.

Abraham, Sarah, and Hagar

Remember that the Bible calls Sarah obedient and submissive as we read this next passage. *“And Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, which she had born unto Abraham, mocking. Wherefore she said unto Abraham, Cast out this bondwoman and her son: for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, even with Isaac. And the thing was very grievous in Abraham’s sight because of his son. And God said unto Abraham, Let it not be grievous in thy sight because of the lad, and because of thy bondwoman; in all that Sarah hath said unto thee, hearken unto her voice; for in Isaac shall thy seed be called,”* —Genesis 21:9-12. Notice that God Himself tells Abraham to listen to and do all that his wife says, because she knows the score in this case, and he does not have a clue. Has God subverted His own divine order here? I think not. God does not do things like that. *“For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven,”* —Psalm 119:89.

Has Sarah usurped Abraham’s headship of the family here? No, she has merely given him sound advice. That is exactly why Proverbs 31:10-11 says, *“Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies. The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil.”*

Now, certainly none of us would be so presumptuous as to pick this instance out of the lives of Abraham and Sarah, and form a doctrine stating that, because this occurrence is recorded in the Bible, a man is bound by Scripture to enact the counsel of his wife. However, why then do we pick out one similar instance in the lives of the same two people, and form a doctrine stating

Are You Serious About Marriage?

that, because that occurrence is recorded in the Bible, a woman is bound by Scripture to sin because her husband asks her?

Nabal, Abigail, and David

Since 1 Samuel 25 sheds a little more light on this subject of a thinking wife, let's read it.

“And Samuel died; and all the Israelites were gathered together; and lamented him, and buried him in his house at Ramah. And David arose, and went down to the wilderness of Paran. And there was a man in Maon, whose possessions were in Carmel; and the man was very great, and he had three thousand sheep, and a thousand goats: and he was shearing his sheep in Carmel. Now the name of the man was Nabal; and the name of his wife Abigail: and she was a woman of good understanding, and of a beautiful countenance: but the man was churlish and evil in his doings; and he was of the house of Caleb. And David heard in the wilderness that Nabal did shear his sheep. And David sent out ten young men, and David said unto the young men, Get you up to Carmel, and go to Nabal, and greet him in my name: and thus shall ye say to him that liveth in prosperity, Peace be both to thee, and peace be to thine house, and peace be unto all that thou hast. And now I have heard that thou hast shearers: now thy shepherds which were with us, we hurt them not, neither was there ought missing unto them, all the while they were in Carmel. Ask thy young men, and they will shew thee. Wherefore let the young men find favour in thine eyes: for we come in a good day: give, I pray thee, whatsoever cometh to thine hand unto thy servants, and to thy son David. And when David's young men came, they spake

Are You Serious About Marriage?

to Nabal according to all those words in the name of David, and ceased. And Nabal answered David's servants, and said, Who is David? and who is the son of Jesse? there be many servants now a days that break away every man from his master. Shall I then take my bread, and my water, and my flesh that I have killed for my shearers, and give it unto men, whom I know not whence they be? So David's young men turned their way, and went again, and came and told him all those sayings. And David said unto his men, Gird ye on every man his sword. And they girded on every man his sword; and David also girded on his sword: and there went up after David about four hundred men; and two hundred abode by the stuff. But one of the young men told Abigail, Nabal's wife, saying, Behold, David sent messengers out of the wilderness to salute our master; and he railed on them. But the men were very good unto us, and we were not hurt, neither missed we any thing, as long as we were conversant with them, when we were in the fields: they were a wall unto us both by night and day, all the while we were with them keeping the sheep. Now therefore know and consider what thou wilt do; for evil is determined against our master, and against all his household: for he is such a son of Belial, that a man cannot speak to him. Then Abigail made haste, and took two hundred loaves, and two bottles of wine, and five sheep ready dressed, and five measures of parched corn, and an hundred clusters of raisins, and two hundred cakes of figs, and laid them on asses. And she said unto her servants, Go on before me; behold, I come after you. But she told not her husband Nabal. And it was so, as she rode on the ass, that she came down

Are You Serious About Marriage?

by the covert of the hill, and, behold, David and his men came down against her; and she met them. Now David had said, Surely in vain have I kept all that this fellow hath in the wilderness, so that nothing was missed of all that pertained unto him: and he hath requited me evil for good. So and more also do God unto the enemies of David, if I leave of all that pertain to him by the morning light any that pisseth against the wall. And when Abigail saw David, she hasted, and lighted off the ass, and fell before David on her face, and bowed herself to the ground, and fell at his feet, and said, Upon me, my lord, upon me let this iniquity be: and let thine handmaid, I pray thee, speak in thine audience, and hear the words of thine handmaid. Let not my lord, I pray thee, regard this man of Belial, even Nabal: for as his name is, so is he; Nabal is his name, and folly is with him: but I thine handmaid saw not the young men of my lord, whom thou didst send. Now therefore, my lord, as the LORD liveth, and as thy soul liveth, seeing the LORD hath withholden thee from coming to shed blood, and from avenging thyself with thine own hand, now let thine enemies, and they that seek evil to my lord, be as Nabal. And now this blessing which thine handmaid hath brought unto my lord, let it even be given unto the young men that follow my lord. I pray thee, forgive the trespass of thine handmaid: for the LORD will certainly make my lord a sure house; because my lord fighteth the battles of the LORD, and evil hath not been found in thee all thy days. Yet a man is risen to pursue thee, and to seek thy soul: but the soul of my lord shall be bound in the bundle of life with the LORD thy God; and the souls of thine enemies, them shall he sling out, as

Are You Serious About Marriage?

out of the middle of a sling. And it shall come to pass, when the LORD shall have done to my lord according to all the good that he hath spoken concerning thee, and shall have appointed thee ruler over Israel; that this shall be no grief unto thee, nor offence of heart unto my lord, either that thou hast shed blood causeless, or that my lord hath avenged himself: but when the LORD shall have dealt well with my lord, then remember thine handmaid. And David said to Abigail, Blessed be the LORD God of Israel, which sent thee this day to meet me: and blessed be thy advice, and blessed be thou, which hast kept me this day from coming to shed blood, and from avenging myself with mine own hand. For in very deed, as the LORD God of Israel liveth, which hath kept me back from hurting thee, except thou hadst hastened and come to meet me, surely there had not been left unto Nabal by the morning light any that pisseth against the wall. So David received of her hand that which she had brought him, and said unto her, Go up in peace to thine house; see, I have hearkened to thy voice, and have accepted thy person. And Abigail came to Nabal; and, behold, he held a feast in his house, like the feast of a king; and Nabal's heart was merry within him, for he was very drunken: wherefore she told him nothing, less or more, until the morning light. But it came to pass in the morning, when the wine was gone out of Nabal, and his wife had told him these things, that his heart died within him, and he became as a stone. And it came to pass about ten days after, that the LORD smote Nabal, that he died. And when David heard that Nabal was dead, he said, Blessed be the LORD, that hath pleaded the cause of my reproach from the hand

Are You Serious About Marriage?

of Nabal, and hath kept his servant from evil: for the LORD hath returned the wickedness of Nabal upon his own head. And David sent and communed with Abigail, to take her to him to wife. And when the servants of David were come to Abigail to Carmel, they spake unto her, saying, David sent us unto thee, to take thee to him to wife. And she arose, and bowed herself on her face to the earth, and said, Behold, let thine handmaid be a servant to wash the feet of the servants of my lord. And Abigail hasted, and arose, and rode upon an ass, with five damsels of hers that went after her; and she went after the messengers of David, and became his wife. David also took Ahinoam of Jezreel; and they were also both of them his wives. But Saul had given Michal his daughter, David's wife, to Phalti the son of Laish, which was of Gallim."

Notice that the Word of God says that Abigail "was a woman of good understanding," —1 Samuel 25:3, and that Psalm 111:10 says, "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that do his commandments: his praise endureth for ever;" and Proverbs 13:15-17 says, "Good understanding giveth favour: but the way of transgressors is hard. Every prudent man dealeth with knowledge: but a fool layeth open his folly. A wicked messenger falleth into mischief: but a faithful ambassador is health." Nabal's heart ("Nabal," incidently, means "fool" or "dolt") did safely trust in Abigail, and she saved him and his spoil from imminent destruction. She also was sent by the Lord to save David from sin. "And David said to Abigail, Blessed be the LORD God of Israel, which sent thee this day to meet me," —1 Samuel 25:32.

Are You Serious About Marriage?

Her role was to serve and protect her husband, whom she called her lord, in all that she did. Yet, a blind and dumb wife cannot offer such trust. Had she participated in her husband's sin, he, she and all the servants who knew Nabal did wrong but were powerless to change things would have been destroyed. The Word of God offers nothing but praise for Abigail's behavior as a wife. Now, circumstances seem to indicate that she was married to an unbelieving fool, but Scripture certainly does not indicate that a godly woman ever participates in the sin of her unbelieving, foolish husband.

Manoah, His Wife, and an Angel

Abraham and Sarah are not the only example in Scripture of the wife explaining spiritual matters to a husband who does not quite understand. Sampson's father Manoah and his wife are another instance. Let's read about them in Judges 13.

“And the children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the LORD; and the LORD delivered them into the hand of the Philistines forty years. And there was a certain man of Zorah, of the family of the Danites, whose name was Manoah; and his wife was barren, and bare not. And the angel of the LORD appeared unto the woman, and said unto her, Behold now, thou art barren, and bearest not: but thou shalt conceive, and bear a son. Now therefore beware, I pray thee, and drink not wine nor strong drink, and eat not any unclean thing: for, lo, thou shalt conceive, and bear a son; and no razor shall come on his head: for the child shall be a Nazarite unto God from the womb: and he shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines. Then the woman came and told her husband, saying, A man of God came unto

Are You Serious About Marriage?

me, and his countenance was like the countenance of an angel of God, very terrible: but I asked him not whence he was, neither told he me his name: but he said unto me, Behold, thou shalt conceive, and bear a son; and now drink no wine nor strong drink, neither eat any unclean thing: for the child shall be a Nazarite to God from the womb to the day of his death. Then Manoah intreated the LORD, and said, O my Lord, let the man of God which thou didst send come again unto us, and teach us what we shall do unto the child that shall be born. And God hearkened to the voice of Manoah; and the angel of God came again unto the woman as she sat in the field: but Manoah her husband was not with her. And the woman made haste, and ran, and shewed her husband, and said unto him, Behold, the man hath appeared unto me, that came unto me the other day. And Manoah arose, and went after his wife, and came to the man, and said unto him, Art thou the man that spakest unto the woman? And he said, I am. And Manoah said, Now let thy words come to pass. How shall we order the child, and how shall we do unto him? And the angel of the LORD said unto Manoah, Of all that I said unto the woman let her beware. She may not eat of any thing that cometh of the vine, neither let her drink wine or strong drink, nor eat any unclean thing: all that I commanded her let her observe. And Manoah said unto the angel of the LORD, I pray thee, let us detain thee, until we shall have made ready a kid for thee. And the angel of the LORD said unto Manoah, Though thou detain me, I will not eat of thy bread: and if thou wilt offer a burnt offering, thou must offer it unto the LORD. For Manoah knew not that he was an angel of the LORD. And Manoah said unto

Are You Serious About Marriage?

the angel of the LORD, What is thy name, that when thy sayings come to pass we may do thee honour? And the angel of the LORD said unto him, Why askest thou thus after my name, seeing it is secret? So Manoah took a kid with a meat offering, and offered it upon a rock unto the LORD: and the angel did wondrously; and Manoah and his wife looked on. For it came to pass, when the flame went up toward heaven from off the altar, that the angel of the LORD ascended in the flame of the altar. And Manoah and his wife looked on it, and fell on their faces to the ground. But the angel of the LORD did no more appear to Manoah and to his wife. Then Manoah knew that he was an angel of the LORD. And Manoah said unto his wife, We shall surely die, because we have seen God. But his wife said unto him, If the LORD were pleased to kill us, he would not have received a burnt offering and a meat offering at our hands, neither would he have shewed us all these things, nor would as at this time have told us such things as these. And the woman bare a son, and called his name Samson: and the child grew, and the LORD blessed him. And the Spirit of the LORD began to move him at times in the camp of Dan between Zorah and Eshtaol.”

This is an example of a very prudent wife. It is the wife, not the husband, who is visited by an angel, but she wisely apprises her husband of the situation. He then, not she, proceeds to commit a number of errors in dealing with the angel because of his lack of understanding of the situation. The fact that his wife does fully understand is evident because “*Manoah said unto his wife, We shall surely die, because we have seen God. But his wife said unto him, If the LORD were*

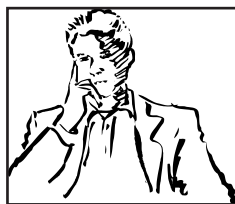
Are You Serious About Marriage?

pleased to kill us, he would not have received a burnt offering and a meat offering at our hands, neither would he have shewed us all these things, nor would as at this time have told us such things as these,” —Judges 13:22-23.

The beauty of this story is that it is a literal picture of what we are talking about. Though she was under the authority of her husband and submissive in every way, God chose to contact Manoah’s wife directly. God not only shows us that this is no reversal of His divine order, but also upholds the physical headship of the man by the very fact that, even though she was the one that the angel was sent to seek, Scripture never even gives the name of Manoah’s wife.

A Woman Married to a New Believer

Suppose a woman marries a new believer. Do we really expect that this young lady, who has a lifetime background of Bible reading and spiritual experience, will simply allow her husband to stumble along learning everything the hard way, or by some round-about method? What about when her husband asks her a question to which she does indeed know the answer? If he is an earnest Christian, and not too sinfully proud to do so, he certainly will do so. Are we saying that she is to deliberately withhold the information that he needs, and then call this behavior obedience to him? Does she not assume a position over him when she makes the decision that his request for truth is illegitimate and denies it? Now we can see how badly a few words about women not teaching can be



Are You Serious About Marriage?

twisted when wrested away from the rest of Scripture. Here we are taking fire to bed with us again.

The Subject of Vows

Before we move on, let's read one more passage for what it really says. *“Every vow, and every binding oath to afflict the soul, her husband may establish it, or her husband may make it void. But if her husband altogether hold his peace at her from day to day; then he establisheth all her vows, or all her bonds, which are upon her: he confirmeth them, because he held his peace at her in the day that he heard them. But if he shall any ways make them void after that he hath heard them; then he shall bear her iniquity,”* —Numbers 30:13-15.

Some people would have us believe that we are to take this as a statement of the husband's absolute domination of the wife. However, we have already looked at enough Scripture to know that the husband is accorded no such power. Look closely at the last sentence in the passage. It says that if the *husband* causes the vows of the wife to be broken after agreeing to them he shall bear her iniquity. The nature of marriage is such that its intimacy dictates that any vow made by one partner is likely to affect the other. In other words, a woman is hardly likely to make a vow that the man will not be affected by keeping in some way. Therefore, if a man is going to be obliged to suffer under a vow, he is entitled to the option of disavowing it (refusing to be obligated by it) since it was not his vow, and he does not want to be held responsible for helping to keep it. So, the law says that when the husband hears the vow, and realizes that it will probably affect him, and that he does not wish to be part of such a bargain, he has the opportunity to back

Are You Serious About Marriage?

out. If he does not do so at that time, it becomes his vow also, and he will be held responsible if he breaks his part of the vow later. Therefore, he will bear her iniquity only if he, himself, breaks her vow to which he, himself, agreed.

So, contrary to what some would have us believe, this passage in the law does not indicate any responsibility of the man for the woman in the area of sin or in any other area for that matter. It simply indicates his responsibility to keep a vow of which he has willingly decided to become a part. It says nothing more and nothing less.

Real-life Situations

Real-life situations like an experienced Christian wife being married to a less experienced husband, or situations like Manoah and his wife, arise every day, but the “absolute obedience” advocates have no answers for them. So they play the “perfect marriage” trump card. They simply say that if the two had married properly, this situation would never occur, which is a cop-out and a lie. It does not matter what they mandate as the perfect process by which we should marry, life will show, and God already knows, that in the lives of many Christians this perfect process is simply not going to occur. God has ordained no specific process for marriage. You will not come to know, or know of, many of God’s servants without realizing that they have become joined in lifetime partnership by any number of different methods and circumstances.

Even if there was a specific process by which we should marry, it would change nothing. God, fortunately, is not like us. He does not deal with the situations that

Are You Serious About Marriage?

occur in life by writing them off and saying that they never should have happened. He takes us from where we are now, and moves us forward. That is what the Bible is about. It is not a “hit list” by which we compare who has done things right and who has not. Scripture truly does not allow for *any* specific process for *anything* in life that can be claimed as the “right way.” Jesus said in John 4:24, “*God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.*”

Manipulative Tactics Used by Those Supporting the Absolute Obedience to Man Doctrine

This cop-out, though, goes way beyond the perfect marriage syndrome. In order to support an unsupportable doctrine of absolute obedience in the face of real life, which does not agree, it gets far more devious and manipulative. It simply becomes a matter of one lie falling back on the next, and the next, and the next, until the prey finally believes one.

First Line of False Defense

For example, the first line of defense is that the woman should obey the man in absolutely everything. Even after manipulating some scriptures, and even after bombastic repeated insistence, as if reinforcement by volume should be convincing, the promoters of this doctrine realize that this doctrine cannot carry itself. They know that they have to face the question of the husband asking the wife to commit outright sin. All but the most irrational will back down in the face of this question, and agree, if forced, that the wife should not comply with such a request. However, while they agree, they apply pressure to intimidate her to make the

Are You Serious About Marriage?

decision to sin, herself. How? We shall see as we look at the rest of the lines of defense for their argument.

Second Line of False Defense

When the ruse that it is godly to sin fails to be totally convincing, the second line of defense becomes the statement, “A woman’s husband will never ask her to sin, anyway.” This lie may be accepted by those whom God has allowed to live lives so protected that they are unaware of the real level of sin in the world. It can hardly be assumed that people who are heavily involved with this issue have never known of instances in which men made wicked demands of their wives, so it must be alternately assumed that they simply refuse to talk about what they know to be true because it would hurt their argument. After all, such instances are in the newspapers. They are a large enough problem that all fifty states have passed laws against such behavior. Why would they do that if such behavior does not exist? Okay, maybe this doctrine won’t fly yet. Let’s fall back to the third line of defense.

Third Line of False Defense

“If you were the right kind of wife, your husband would never make unreasonable demands upon you, so the problem is your fault.” This is not only a lie, but it is a very harmful and devious lie. First of all, since when did God give a free will only to the woman, and not to the man? As if that were not ludicrous enough, now we have a complete role reversal. The people who were saying a moment ago that the man was accountable for the sins of the woman, are now saying that the woman is now, instead, accountable for the sins of the man! How

Are You Serious About Marriage?

many directions can we go at the same time? Praise God that He is still going the direction that He always was, and that is that everyone will account for their own actions.

One of the more devious parts of this argument is that we all have the tendency to be hooked by statements like, “If a woman is a submissive, obedient, and good wife, I just cannot see a man asking her to commit any serious sin.” People seldom see what they do not want to see. Balaam could not see the angel in the way, but the poor dumb donkey could! Jeremiah 17:9 says, “*The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?*” Deliberately underestimating the wickedness of men’s hearts does not offer solutions. It creates problems.

The people who make such statements do not seem to realize how utterly contradictory they are to the very core of their position. Let’s look at Sarah. The Bible says that she was submissive. The Bible says that she called her husband lord. The Bible gives her credit for being a good wife. Did not her husband ask her to sin? Did not that sin amount to adultery on her part? Remember, the Bible does not say that God delivered Sarah. It says that God delivered Abimelech because of his integrity. How do the people who twist Scripture to use Abraham and Sarah as part of their argument tell us, at the same time, that a man would never be so wicked as to ask his wife to sin?

Fourth Line of False Defense

Okay, how about the fourth line of defense called supernatural deliverance? The husband wants the woman to sin. She has done her best to be a good wife,

Are You Serious About Marriage?

but she does not want to sin. What does she do? This line of defense says that she simply prays for God to deliver her, and God will simply change her husband's heart. It's that simple, because God would not be God if He did not.

It all sounds so easy and so very impressive when we hear it, but what happens when we apply it to reality? The reality is that God does not always deliver. He sometimes just requires us to do right and obey His commandments. Reality is that there have been martyrs turned in by their own families. Do we think that those martyrs did not pray that God would deliver them?

So, the reality is that the wife has prayed for God to deliver her. Time is down to the wire. If God doesn't deliver her, she will be forced to obey her husband and sin. Of course, this isn't considered her sin because she is pleasing God by committing sin. So, God must want her to do this awful thing if He does not deliver her. Therefore, God must have wanted those martyrs to recant because He did not deliver them. These purveyors of false doctrine assure the woman that God will deliver her or He would not be God! God does not deprive us of our free will by blocking us from committing sin. We are expected to *obey* Him. He does not prevent us from the opportunity to be His.

The Worst Part Yet to Come

But we have not even come to the worst part yet. After these people tell the poor woman that she has not been the perfect wife, and that is the reason that she is in the situation that she is, they offer no solution. They offer nothing. So, there they leave her, trapped between feeling guilty that she has not been perfect and

Are You Serious About Marriage?

the ominous choice that she is being forced to make by her husband. As the old saying goes, “With friends like these, who needs enemies?” Fortunately, she still has God, and He is not so judgmental. No wife has ever been perfect. Some may have dipped lower in sin than others, and will have more trouble from their past than others, but all who have looked to Jesus are forgiven. There is no perfection. There is only the growth of sinners as they strive to eliminate sin from their lives a little bit at a time. There is no difference between the wife with a wicked husband and the woman who tells her that it is her fault, except that they have different husbands. One is simply more presumptuous and self-righteous.

Thus, through such manipulation, we may now have a woman who is so torn by guilt and grief over her own sin and what she has been told that she is responsible for that she is now well nigh being convinced that she should sin again. At this point she is willing to do almost anything, if someone will tell her that it will make the situation go away. The problem is that if she listens to these people, it will only get worse. The sheer magnitude of the incongruities encountered in even trying to accept any part of this line of thinking is simply insurmountable.

A Short Detour

I am going to make a short detour here. I feel that it is necessary to call attention to possibly hundreds of other guidelines for automated living that are cropping up in our midst. Folks, the separation required of the Christian is difficult, and those around us seldom make it easier, but, please, let's not become bigots in the process.

Are You Serious About Marriage?

We are not serving Jesus when we go around boasting that we have the only right way to teach children, get married, deliver babies, etc. The Bible is very specific on these issues. It never mandates a particular process for any of them. God specifically decided to be silent on these issues so that no certain group could brag that they are doing it His way. When we buy into the “I am doing it right syndrome,” we are doing nothing but factionalizing into smug, exclusive groups. This soon leads to an “our way is the only way” attitude. We should be very careful about judging marriages or how they were formed, since we cannot possibly know how God is working in the lives of others. Regarding marriage, even Paul, who was single, said that for most people it was better to marry—not only for men, but also for women (“*I will therefore that the younger women marry, bear children, guide the house, give none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully,*” —1 Timothy 5:14). Also, notice the words “guide the house.” Again, one must be a thinking, vibrant, heads-up individual to guide a household, such as in the case of the Proverbs 31 woman.

The Biblical Way to Lead a Wife

The woman that we marry is to be a boon and a joy, not someone to be kept in line. Proverbs 18:22 says, “*Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour of the LORD.*” The only way given in the Bible to lead a wife is in the two great commandments. One must follow God with all of one’s heart. His wife will then see that his judgment is godly and that she can trust it. He is then to treat her with love, honor, and respect equal to himself. Then she can see that he has a

Are You Serious About Marriage?

godly walk and that her walk should follow along with it. Actually, the New Testament is full of scriptures that tell us to esteem others *better* than ourselves, and to take the subordinate role of the *younger* if we intend to lead. Then a wife will be able to follow one's godly judgment and walk, rather than a list of demands. A man may find many scriptures telling him what to do for his wife, but he will find none describing what he is allowed to demand of her. If she can trust him to be true to her God, then she can trust him to be true to her. Otherwise, she is forced to go it alone, and follow Him Who has always been true to her.

The Biblical Way for a Wife to Follow

How is the wife to follow? She is to love her husband. This easily circumvents all the synthetic approaches to submission and obedience on the part of both the husband and the wife. There have been articles in many previous issues of *In Keeping with the Faith* (now compiled into *Are You Serious About Marriage?*) discussing how the wife is to love her husband. She is to fulfill his every need *and* desire. She is to be his best friend, his closest companion, his helpmeet, his lover. She is to prefer him before herself. She is to honor and serve him. She is to spend her life pleasing him. She is to love him as she loves herself. Basically, she simply obeys the first and second great commandments. She loves God totally, and her total love for God can be seen by her obedience to His commandments. God is her boss, and He has given her the assignment of being a helpmeet to her husband, which includes loving him as she loves herself. If she loves him in this manner, she will be willing to help him to do anything but sin against

Are You Serious About Marriage?

God and himself, the two most important persons in her life.

Interestingly enough, the role of the husband is *exactly the same*. He is to be all of these things to his wife and to prefer her above himself. “*Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another;*” —Romans 12:10. Since Jesus taught us that the chiefest among us is to be the servant, we can see that the husband has a dual role. He is the physical head and protector of the family, and, therefore, in Christ, he is to assume the lowly position of servant.

Divine Order Preserved

In keeping God’s first great commandment first, His divine order is preserved. The order is Christ first, then the man under Christ, and then the woman under the man. If a man turns to sin, or demands that his wife sin, he is *not under Christ’s authority*. The ungodly man *has removed himself* from the divine order. The only hope for the wife is to stick with Jesus. She must stay within the divine order. She must keep the first great commandment first or all is lost. Keeping the first commandment first is the only way that she can show biblical love for her husband. “*By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments,*” —I John 5:2.

God created a beautiful bond to exist between a man and a woman. Yes, woman is under the man in position and certainly must yield to his decisions on all matters which are not sinful. However, marriage is a give and take relationship. Certainly, Abraham and Sarah are wonderful examples of this give and take relationship. At times, each of them made mistakes in discerning

Are You Serious About Marriage?

God's will. At other times, one could see God's will more clearly than the other. That is how it is in all relationships between believers. A relationship is a vibrant, living, ever-changing thing between two people. The beauty of the relationship for believers is that the two are focused on Christ and keep pressing forward. The man and wife are a team. It is therefore rather foolish to say that a woman must be silent and not give any input. On this marriage team, the man and woman simply play different positions. The captain of the team is Jesus.

On this marriage team, the man and woman simply play different positions. The captain of the team is Jesus.

When we begin to lift individual verses out of context and try to define in microscopic detail how each individual man and woman should live, we simply ruin God's plan that they follow Him. Marriage is a melding process of two becoming one. The relationship itself is one of God's own tools to rub off our rough edges, and to get us to see life through the eyes of another if we are at all willing. A person takes a tremendous leap of growth upon entering into marriage and family-building. God's Word tells us to put others first, but marriage and parenting place us face to face with the continual opportunities that we need to learn and implement the concept.

The Grey Areas

Marriage is a relationship where we learn to put another first, to love, honor, and serve. Yet, many have questions like, "What about all the grey areas that are

Are You Serious About Marriage?

not expressly forbidden in God's Word, which often become tug-of-war issues, because the husband and wife have differing opinions?" The list is endless and goes something like —The husband wants to attend one church, and the wife another. The husband wants to eat healthy, and the wife loves McDonald's. The wife is a penny pincher, and the husband is a spendthrift. One wants a television, and the other doesn't. One holds to hymns, and the other contemporary Christian music. One wants to vacation at amusement parks, and the other in national parks.

As you can see, the list can go on *ad infinitum*. But God has no grey areas. If we think He has, then we are mistaken, for God is holy and pure. It is to God and His Word that we must flee to in order to find the answers for the grey areas in our lives. "*Shew me thy ways, O LORD; teach me thy paths. Lead me in thy truth, and teach me: for thou art the God of my salvation; on thee do I wait all the day,*" —Psalm 25:4-5.

He will give wisdom if we earnestly seek Him and His answers. We cannot draw the line for other couples, but God can. These are areas about which couples need to talk and pray with each other. They are matters to be decided along the path to a holier life devoted to God. Sometimes the wife will have a keener insight into some of them. If the husband chooses not to agree, that is his prerogative, but, at some point in time, if both are devoted to God, they will both come to have peace and agreement on the issue. The wife should be long-suffering and patient. God is able to lead her husband. Also, the husband should be long-suffering and patient. Sometimes, the husband is going forth in

Are You Serious About Marriage?

paths of holiness, and it is the wife who is dragging her feet. He must be long-suffering and patient with her, but he continues to lead his family, praying diligently for his wife to see the light. Husbands and wives are to encourage each other in godly living, heeding the words in Hebrews 10:24: *“And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works.”*

To Obey or Not to Obey

Thus, when a woman faces the question, “To obey or not to obey,” the answer is not so difficult. She is to love God first and then submit to her husband. Of course, all the answers that a man needs are that he should love God first, and then prefer his wife above himself. Love God and love one another as ourselves. On those two *hang all the law and the prophets.*

Cults Promote Absolute Obedience Doctrine

One of the reasons that the doctrine of allegiance of the woman to the man rather than to God is becoming such a widespread problem is that it is being heavily promoted by certain denominations and cults to enhance their power structure. For example, a man and a woman wishing to follow God and obey His commandments happen upon a conservative-sounding church or denomination and begin to attend. They hear some things that sound very holy. They already know in their hearts that the man is appointed by God as the leader of the home, so before long, because it has that certain “ring of truth,” they begin to listen to this distended “all power to the man” version. The husband turns to his meekly-following wife and begins to demand ultimate authority in her life, even in areas to which he has no

Are You Serious About Marriage?

right. Often, because of guilt over the fact that she is not perfect, the wife readily submits to things that she should not, expecting such penance to alleviate that guilt.

As the man is exacting this loyalty without reason from his wife and family, he soon finds himself being tapped on the shoulder. As he turns, he finds the leader or denomination that has set itself up as authority over him saying, “It would only be right for you to be the same kind of loyal follower that you expect your wife to be.” And so it comes full circle. Obedience begets obedience and blindness begets blindness.

He now feels compelled to comply, not only by external pressure, but by his own pride. Should he deny what he said that he believed and expected from his wife? Should he now become a fool by denying what he preached? He is garnered by guile. The leader or denomination says, “You are simply a link in the chain of command. Now that we have shown you your place over your wife, according to the principle of unquestioned leadership authority, it is time to fall in unquestioningly behind those who claim to be your authority.” In other words, he is to be accountable to someone—that someone being not God, but man.

There are several new denominations springing up around the country that are combining a conservative outlook, a doctrine of loyalty, total submission of women, and an “all or nothing” acceptance of their doctrines to build a very tight followship. *Alas, it is not followship of the Lord.*

The Problem in a Nutshell

This is truly the problem in a nutshell. No one

Are You Serious About Marriage?

would argue that a helpmeet should not have a reverent and obedient attitude toward her husband, but she should have it because of her love of God. If that is so, she will have an even more reverent and obedient attitude toward God. When a person comes to Jesus, the devil tries to intimidate him not to change his life. If he resists and determinedly begins to clean up his life, the devil takes a different approach. He then might try using godly-sounding people and doctrines to convince the believer to focus on a righteous life rather than Him Who makes a life righteous. He may use convoluted doctrines of loyalty which teach that the wife should sin for the husband. Yet the believer, if he or she stays with the Word, will know that there is no call from God to go back to sin. Colossians 3:8-10 tells us, *“But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; and have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him.”* We simply cannot find God saying anywhere in His Word that we should serve Him with sin.

That is why this doctrine is so malicious. It not only teaches sin, subtly disguised as devotion to God, but it places such sin on a par with the thought of being one of God’s choicest Christians. It is like the beckoning waves of a cool, refreshing surf that break ever so pleasantly on the surface, but below the surface returns a deadly undertow just waiting to drown us. As we said earlier, it raises man not to the level of God but above Him. It also implements two more of the devil’s favorite tools: making God’s commandments relative, and making sin

Are You Serious About Marriage?

relative. These two little gems reduce everything in life, no matter how holy it may sound, to situation ethics. Situation ethics, of course, by nature make everything in life relative to accountability to other men rather than to God. Such a philosophy makes “follow the leader” downright enforceable. It’s a pretty tidy little circle, don’t you think?

Did you ever notice that the difference between a straight path and a circular one is just a slight veering to either the right or the left? The devil knows that people are turned from the Lord slowly and gradually. My term for it is “the turning of the herd.” In the old days a few cowboys could turn a stampeding herd of thousands of head of cattle. They simply had to start turning them very slightly. Actually, they could then gradually turn them into a tighter and tighter circle until they came to a stop. That is exactly how the devil and his false doctrines turn many who are attempting to follow the straight and narrow path. If they become turned by man or his doctrines, they will likely follow in a tighter and tighter circle until all forward progress is halted.

The Answer

The answer is to follow Jesus. However, we will be enticed by the opposition. We will be promised unity with others. But if we get too close to the herd, we will get sucked in. Do we need unity? Jesus said, *“Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man’s foes shall be they of his own household. He that loveth father or mother more*

Are You Serious About Marriage?

than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me,” —Matthew 10:34-38.

In returning to the title of this article, *Of Loyalty and Lost Vision*, have you noticed that it is unquestionably easier to be loyal with one’s eyes closed? Yet wherefore did God give us vision?

Jeff

A Letter

The following is an excerpt from a reader's letter, used with permission, who at this time bears the unequal yoke of being married to an unbeliever. She is *living* the walk that most of us only talk about. We have included it because it strikes at the very core of the issue of a woman's obedience, it so eloquently defines it as an intelligent "walk" rather than a "fits-all" rule, and it comes from a source who knows whereof she speaks. We chose to add this letter after the article only because there were so many appropriate places to insert it that we could not pick one. She shares these thoughts with us concerning obedience to her unbelieving husband.

As to my own beliefs and the seeming conflicts which seem to tug a woman in two directions, from the perspective of being unequally yoked, of being put to this test regularly, I have found that it is very rarely an either/or choice. Somehow, someway—a way I'm not certain I can explain properly in a few paragraphs—He (God) makes them to work together. I've often experienced how the Lord will step in and intervene in a compromising circumstance. He has always protected my obedience and my witness. He promises to lead me down the paths of righteousness for His name's sake (Psalm 23). By faith, I believe Him, with my focus being "for His name's sake." Many times He has "by-passed" my having to give an answer to a compromising question altogether. This, I believe, is a "bigger" witness to my husband, than if I myself had just said "No, I can't do that."

But I also realize that our spiritual obligations are

Are You Serious About Marriage?

not diminished in any way. Peter tells us (the unequally yoked) that we are to suffer for doing good. If that's the case, then there has to be a defining line to our behavior in a moment of compromise. Yet, at the same time there are a million and one facets to each circumstance which one must consider. Also, a woman has to be very careful in being discerning that she's truly allowing the Lord to define the line of any form of "selective" obedience (as He did with Abigail). There are those out there who would latch on to any excuse to self-righteously beat their husbands over the head with a spiritual brick for any and every "perceived" sin, if they thought they were given leave to do so. And in complete truth, even I have to be careful . . . It's much easier and quicker to tell my husband, "I can't do that," than to give the Lord time to work out the situation.

The bottom line is that one cannot go wrong if she is working at being wholly dependent on the Lord. If that is the most important thing in a woman's life, then all the rest, including proper marital obedience, will come into line.

Also, the following paragraph closed her letter. We reprint it here *only* to show how easy it is for believers to unintentionally exclude some dear saints of God, and possibly even hurt the nonbeliever, with our self-righteousness, which we sometimes carry as a club instead of bearing our love as a cup of cold water.

I cannot tell you the "balm" to the spirit it is to read In Keeping with the Faith. Why is it so soothing? Because you don't exclude us. Many folks nowadays

Are You Serious About Marriage?

are stuck in the “group-think” idea, and many teachings have come out of that—how to dress, where to live, what to eat, how many children to have, etc., etc. An unequally yoked wife is stuck in the middle. She can’t fit with the “group” (and if she’s trying to fit with the group . . . then she’s laying a big spiritual burden on her husband), but she’s not part of the world either. Jeff and you seek to dispel any group-thinking as well as worldly-thinking and that immediately opens up a path where an unequally yoked woman can “step” right into and feel comfortable without fearing judgment either from the world or from other Christians. It’s like an oasis . . . and trust me, there are few oases in this life.

In Conclusion

We alluded to this idea in the “detour” in the main article. It is definitely a defective part of our thinking that causes us to collect into cliques that “have things right.” We, here at Keepers of the Faith, are also guilty on many counts of being unaware of our exclusion of others. How about it, folks? Why don’t we all work harder at being an oasis for our fellow believers in Christ? Surely, there is more each of can do to help others along the way.

Jeff & Susan

Chapter XIII

A Modest Proposal

The following article is written jointly by my husband, Jeff, and me on the topic of modesty for men and women.

Of all the many letters we receive requesting topics to be addressed, the second most requested topic has been, and still is, the subject of modesty. It is such a seemingly troubling topic for many, and sometimes turns into a very divisive subject. One point of confusion is that many people seem to equate modesty with chastity, when, in fact, they are distinct from each other. Chastity, or woman's dress, is one facet, the smallest facet, of the much larger subject of modesty. This causes even more confusion when we begin to try to tie the word "modesty," especially in Scripture, to certain specific types of behavior, dress, etc. On the issue of chastity there may, in some cases, be a real enough problem, but the real issue for most of us, even though we proclaim modesty, is a lack of it. The standard for real modesty, as spoken of in the Bible, is quite high, and, I fear, most of us fall short of godly modesty. Let's take a look.

The Definition

When we use terms, it is beneficial to have a good working definition of each term involved. Since our discussion of the term "modesty" will include its use

Are You Serious About Marriage?

and meaning as it relates to biblical issues, and modern dictionaries tend to adopt popular misuses of words as evolution of the language, we will resort to an older dictionary that more accurately depicts the whole definition of the word “modesty” when it was used in translating the Bible into English. According to *The American Dictionary of the English Language* by Noah Webster (1828), modesty is:

1. That lowly temper which accompanies a moderate estimate of one’s own worth and importance. This temper when natural, springs in some measure from timidity, and in young and inexperienced persons, is allied to bashfulness and diffidence. In persons who have seen the world, and lost their natural timidity, *modesty* springs no less from principle than from feeling, and is manifested by retiring, unobtrusive manners, assuming less to itself than others are willing to yield, and conceding to others all due honor and respect, or even more than they expect or require.

2. Modesty, as an act or series of acts, consists in humble, unobtrusive deportment, as opposed to extreme boldness, forwardness, arrogance, presumption, audacity or impudence. Thus we say, the petitioner urged his claims with *modesty*; the speaker addressed the audience with *modesty*.

3. Moderation; decency.

4. In *females*, modesty has the like character as in males; but the word is used also as synonymous with chastity, or purity of manners. In this sense, modesty results from purity of mind, or from the fear of disgrace and ignominy fortified by education and principle. Unaffected *modesty* is the sweetest charm of female excellence, the richest gem in the diadem of their honor.

This is quite a definition. Take a moment or two

Are You Serious About Marriage?

to reread this definition slowly and meditate on it just a bit. Modesty is not

Modesty is not defined by specifics such as clothing, but is defined as one of the facets of our temper (spirit).

defined by specifics such as clothing, but is defined as one of the facets of our temper (spirit). It is defined as an inner attitude of humility (well beyond chastity) which governs a person's behavior. Establishing definitions here is rather important because the word "modest," for all its current widespread use, is only used one time in the entire Bible. Beyond that, the Bible speaks no more about modest behavior, but does give examples of the kind of behavior that might emanate from a humble or modest heart.

Here is the scripture containing the word modest. *"In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; but (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works,"* —1 Timothy 2:9-10. The Greek word translated "modest" is *kosimos*. According to *Strong's Greek Dictionary*, the KJV translation is: of good behaviour, modest. The other definition listed is: orderly, i.e. decorous. The word decorous, of course, is derived from the word decorum, meaning proper and correct as regarding behavior. Having thus formed some idea of where we will be going with this issue of modesty, we can begin to seek some possible examples of modest behavior in the Bible.

Jesus, Our Example of Modesty

The lowly temper exhibited by modest behavior is manifested in our Supreme Example, Jesus. It is written of Him, *“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross,”* —Philippians 2:5-8. We are admonished to have the mind of Jesus, which is a mind that makes of itself no reputation, but humbles itself even unto death. Elsewhere in the Scriptures we are told: *“Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves,”* —Philippians 2:3.

What Is a Modest Person Like?

So, by definition and from scriptural example, what is a modest person like? A modest person knows that he is nothing, just a sinner saved by God’s wonderful grace, by Jesus’ shed blood on the cross. However, it goes further than that. A modest person will know his true value, and because he does, he will esteem others better than himself. He will not strive to be best, to have the most, to build the biggest, to advertise himself, to receive any praise or recognition, or to otherwise be known at all. It is like *“Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God,”* —Philippians 1:11.

A modest person will not stand out in a crowd. He will not be showy, be the best dressed, speak the loudest,

Are You Serious About Marriage?

or be the center of attention. He will be unobtrusive, which means he will not be prominent. He will be inconspicuous. He will be a quiet person. He will not find it necessary to casually mention his job title, degree, or particular skill, or otherwise emphasize his own importance. He will not give his opinion on every subject. In fact, he will not give his opinion unless asked. We will most likely never hear of a modest person's accomplishments or successes because he will not speak of them. We might find a modest man or woman doing many acts of service for the unlovely, the poor, the elderly, and the young. When he does these acts, he will not brag or "mention" to others that he did them, because he does not seek recognition for what he has done. He will not wish to be on any donor lists or have his contributions published, because Jesus said, ". . . *when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: that thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly,*" —Matthew 6:3-4. Modesty knows that published donor lists seek contributions through appealing to pride—or immodesty.

You will seldom hear the words "I" or "my" come from the lips of a modest person. Recognize any of these? "I would never do that." "I always do this." "I think this." "I wear that." "How about these?" "My standards are thus and so." "My children never do that." "My children always do this." "I am good friends with Dr. So & So." Immodesty often brings up "my" things and "my" accomplishments—the things and accomplishments that "I" claim as belonging to "me."

Even such a statement as, "I won three people to the

Are You Serious About Marriage?

Lord last week,” is really not modest. The attention is really focused on the “I” who receives the recognition. Modesty would say, “Praise God. Three souls came to Jesus and found new life in Him.” Immodesty says, “I serve the Lord.” Again, attention is focused on the “I.” Modesty might say, “It is hard to understand why Jesus would love me.” Immodesty says, “You should be able to tell a Christian by the person’s appearance. I dress a certain way. My hair is a certain length. I go to church every time the doors are open.” Modesty says, “Let me tell you about Jesus. I was a wicked sinner on the way to hell, and Jesus, the Son of God, came and took my place on Calvary, and paid for my sin.” A modest person is determined, as Paul was, in saying, *“For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.”*¹ 1 Corinthians 2:2.

*“For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.”*¹ 1 Corinthians 2:2.

One Symptom of Immodesty

As portrayed in some of the quotes above, one symptom of immodesty is the need to often establish or inform others of one’s righteousness in various matters and areas of life. This is often done by establishing rules or the “right way” for doing things. By advocating such rules as the right way, often the only right way, of handling a certain aspect of life, immodesty often exposes its own pride, as it may even compare others unfavorably to its own personal standards.

Immodesty often prescribes specific physical criteria

Are You Serious About Marriage?

for spiritual matters. Immodesty finds it important for others to see what sets it apart or makes it special. It is physical differences that others are most likely to notice. Yet, Scripture says, “*God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth,*” —John 4:24.

Unfortunately, these physical rules of behavior, or “right ways,” often do not accurately affect true spiritual behavior, but rather become a wall of division based upon the traditions or standards of men. It would be difficult not to notice the constant use of the word “standards” in Christian circles today. Yet, how many times did the Christ upon Whom we base the word “Christian” use the word “standards”? How often did He proclaim His personal behavior criteria? He avoided externals and focused continually on the spiritual. He knew that as the heart falls in line with the heart of God, all externals become what they should be eventually, but reforming externals, even if the change is a needed one, does not reform the heart.

Should We Be Focusing on So Many Externals?

Should we be focusing on so many externals? There may be things which we personally find helpful, but should we preach them as spiritual mandates to others? It seems that most of the confusion faced by sincere Christians is caused by promotion of doctrines emphasizing physical solutions to a spiritual relationship with God. All too often, promotion and adoption of solutions in the flesh as spiritual doctrines tend to inevitably lead to pride and controversy rather than holiness and humility.

For instance, there is nothing wrong with preaching

Are You Serious About Marriage?

the evils of television. The box itself may be amoral, but once it is switched on, who can deny its poisoning effect on one's attitude toward God? Psalm 101:3-4 says, *"I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes: I hate the work of them that turn aside; it shall not cleave to me. A froward heart shall depart from me: I will not know a wicked person."* If we are looking for wicked persons or things, certainly we can trust the television to bring them to us.

However, it would still be incorrect to suggest that giving up television will bring someone closer to God. The Bible records every kind of sin known to man, going back six thousand years, during most of which time no one ever heard of a television set. Man does not need television to sin. Man does not need television in order not to walk with God. However, if a man is a believer, and he wishes to obey God, he will want to set no evil thing before his eyes, and his outward behavior will become aligned with that desire. He may never say anything about it to anyone else. His obedience as a servant of God is between Him and His God.

Yet, another man may give up television and begin immediately to inform others. His abstinence may become an occasion of pride and immodesty to him. A good servant performs his duty without fanfare or notice because it is his reasonable service. Drawing the notice of others to it would be akin to saying, "Look what a good servant I am."

Jesus Told Many Parables—Why?

Jesus told many parables. Why? Because behavior is the result or outworking of heart attitudes. No one knew this any better than our Creator. *"And he said,*

Are You Serious About Marriage?

That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: all these evil things come from within, and defile the man.” —Mark 7:20-23. These are all physical actions which exhibit heart attitudes. When Jesus talked about heart issues, the people simply heard *His* words. When He described behavior, people could see the motives or origins in the heart for themselves. Faith in Jesus comes from the heart and produces godly behavior, not the other way around.

We seem to be finding too many ways to be more godly than others by having better ways to behave or better ways to do things. None of these things mattered to Jesus. To go back to the land is nice, especially for those who desire it and can afford it, but Jesus never once said that it should be done.

We seem to be finding too many ways to be more godly than others by having better ways to behave or better ways to do things. None of these things mattered to Jesus.

He, Himself, Who is our example, lived and worked in the city as the employee of a carpenter shop. He bespoke no doctrines about when, how, or where childbirth should take place. He had no interest in the physical practices governed by ever-changing cultural development. He ordained

no specific methods for seeking a husband or wife. He did not mandate how children should be educated. He

Are You Serious About Marriage?

never mentioned any specific articles of clothing as mandatory for men or women. Today, we actually have movements claiming biblical authority for all of these and more. Jesus ordained no movements except the movement of the individual soul from sin to God. Today, we even wish to be known as part of such movements, taking the name of a particular denomination or movement or the name of its leader. We proudly boast of being Baptists, Presbyterians, Mennonites, Gothardites, Promise Keepers, Holiness, Charity, and on and on. Should our spiritual identification be with movements or with Jesus? Has man saved us? Have movements saved us? Does God care about any movements? Is the crying need for us to identify our beliefs or our Saviour?

Doctrine Is Important

Oh, yes. Doctrine is important. It is very important. However, the importance of doctrine is in finding truth in God's Word for ourselves. How often, though, do we simply accept a set of doctrines from some denomination or movement, and, after hearing only that one opinion, adopt it, and assume ourselves correct and everyone else wrong? And just how modest are we about our borrowed opinion? Oh, I know. We got our opinion from someone very "learned," but, in many cases, it is not ours. We have never tested it, or sincerely tried to scripturally disprove it, because we do not want to be found wrong. So, why do we so proudly and piously look at others as if they are so wrong and we are so right? Would we rather debate about how right we are, or find out the truth? What would be most important to modesty—defending doctrine, or finding truth?

Does modesty need to announce its affiliations with

Are You Serious About Marriage?

popular movements? I think not. Immodesty might say, “I’m Jack. We attend First Church of Thus-and-so. We homeschool. We have our own five acres in the country, eat only natural foods, and believe that everyone should live debt-free. I am also committed to courtship.” Modesty would be more likely to say, “I’m Jack. God has been so good to me, even though I still struggle with so many sins in my life.” The *modest* Jack always seeks to point others toward God and His Word instead of his own beliefs and accomplishments. We do so like to think of ourselves as spiritual leaders of others rather than as humble sinners lamely trying to follow God.

Are we beginning to get an idea of real modesty here? We think that because we attend church, dress conservatively, or have a good “testimony” or outward appearance, we are pretty good people, when actually we are often little more than wellsprings of pride and immodest behavior.

Jesus gave an excellent example of this in the Scriptures. *“And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for*

Are You Serious About Marriage?

every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted,” —Luke 18:9-14.

We never like to associate the term “Pharisee” or “hypocrite” with ourselves. Have you ever noticed these are terms that *everyone* allocates to others? Let’s be honest here. The Pharisees were not the publicans

We never like to associate the term “Pharisee” or “hypocrite” with ourselves. Have you ever noticed these are terms that everyone allocates to others?

and sinners. They were the religious people. They were the people with standards. They were the people who lived right. They were the people who stood on, stood for, and preached the Word of God. They were the kind of people who were concerned about having a testimony that was above reproach. They were the people whose appearance made their zeal for

God apparent. Remember their broad phylacteries? The big sin of the Pharisees was pride, simply pride.

“And he (Jesus) said unto them (the Pharisees), Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God,” —Luke 16:15. Jesus is not addressing immorality, murder, or greed here. He is talking about the Pharisees’ religious convictions. He is talking about their self-blinded adherence to the convictions that they already hold. He is talking about “being right,” and refusing to see or hear any truth to avoid being “misled” or “corrupted.”

Are You Serious About Marriage?

Does any of this sound strangely familiar? Will God mislead or corrupt a real believer seeking truth in His Word and through the Holy Spirit? Why don't we be real? We always insist that the shoe does not fit, but we don't ever dare to try it on. There is a reason for that. We are afraid to look in that mirror. Could it be because deep down in the part of our heart that no one ever sees, we are afraid to find out, or maybe even suspect, that the shoe fits?

Can we deny that Paul was addressing us when he wrote, *“For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?”* —I Corinthians 4:7. Modesty realizes that all is given by God. Salvation is a gift. Health is a gift. Family is a gift. Knowledge is a gift. Prosperity is a gift. Modesty knows, and also gives credence to, the fact that, but for the grace of God, it would be nothing and have nothing. Too many of what we call doctrines and standards today have simply degenerated into self-validating devices.

Serious Lack of Modesty in the Ministry

In this generation (maybe in most generations), there is a serious lack of modesty even in and throughout the ministry. The word ministry comes from “to minister” or “to serve.” If we say God called us to the ministry, then He called us to serve and minister, not lead and rule. Many men are interested in building great works and having great followings, not in being lowly servants of Jesus. Increasingly fewer men are willing to stick by the stuff. They are ready to cross swords (in love, of course) at the slightest difference of opinion, and most

Are You Serious About Marriage?

will never realize what Jesus knew about the ministry, that those who have not been humbled will never be humble. *“And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross,”* —Philippians 2:8.

We are all the same. The moment our focus begins to slip from servanthood, even slightly, our true modesty, humility, and holiness begin to evaporate. How often do we give subtle implications of our humility and modesty? And yet, is not self-advertised humility just one more form of immodesty? Proverbs 27:2 says, *“Let another man praise thee, and not thine own mouth; a stranger, and not thine own lips.”* Can it be humble to praise ourselves for our humility? Again, modesty will always point people to God. Only immodesty causes the reflections of others to fall on one’s self or one’s standards. Modesty urges dependence on God. Immodesty encourages dependency and followship. Modesty says, *“Follow God.”* Immodesty says, *“I will lead you to God.”*

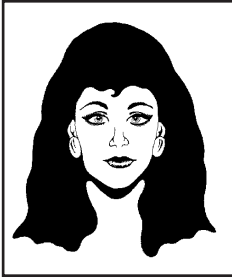
*Again,
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to God.”*

Modesty Pertaining to Women

Now that we have developed a somewhat fuller picture of modesty, and what it really is, let’s try to zoom

Are You Serious About Marriage?

in on how it relates to women's dress—and a biblical description of women's dress—with a little more clarity.



A major concern has been expressed by some that an apparent lack of modesty (actually, chastity) in women's dress—especially in Christian circles—where there ought not to be such a lack, causes males to struggle with impure thoughts, and that certain clothing standards should be instituted. Two problems arise in approaching the idea of implementing modesty in the behavior of others. These concerns about chastity, while quite legitimate, do not nearly address the scope of modesty that God's Word applies to a woman's dress and behavior. Also, mandating particular clothing standards cannot ever achieve even a reasonable level of modesty or chastity in a woman who already comes to church dressed indecently.

The effect that our actions have on others is neither the primary justification nor condemnation of our actions, but when our actions are pleasing to God they will certainly not cause problems for others. However, since the effect of a woman's impure dress on men around her seems to be part of the argument on both sides of this issue, it will do no good to ignore it. Jesus said, "*But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart,*" —Matthew 5:28. Obviously, the verse makes it clear that this is a problem particular to men, who will answer to God for the thoughts of their hearts. This tempts some women to argue, "It is not

Are You Serious About Marriage?

what I wear that is sin. It is what happens in a man's heart when he looks at me that constitutes sin."

Yet, it is not men who are admonished in the Bible to be discreet and chaste, but women.

As Titus 2:4-5 teaches, "*That they may teach the young women to be sober. .*

.to be discreet, chaste . . ." Verses like these leave no doubt that a woman is still responsible for her own actions.

When a woman comes to church dressed in indecent, tight-fitting, or

see-through clothes, it is simply because she wants others to *see through* her clothes. She knows that others will see through them when she buys such clothes, and thus, the sinful intent of her heart is clearly indicated. Men may have trouble with what they see, but women have trouble with wanting to be seen.



We should note that the clothing women wear to be seen is quite often not because they wish to arouse someone's sexual interest. They simply want to be seen. They want to fulfill their pride. They want to be noticed. Women wear all sorts of things to be noticed—eye-catching jewelry, striking makeup, bold colors, fancy hairdos, high heels, or noisy shoes that draw people's attention wherever they walk. Let us not forget facial expressions, body movements, voice inflections and attitudes which cause people to take notice.

However, conservative clothing can also be immodest. It is not my intention to debate with those who wear certain things because they feel that God requires it. If this is so, to do what we think God would have us to do is commendable. Yet, there are women

Are You Serious About Marriage?

who wear things like ultra-long hair or coverings on their heads as much for an outward show or sign of their spirituality, or high religious standards, as for any other reason. Such women may be heard to proclaim, “*I wear my headcovering because I feel that God wants me to do it as a sign of my obedience.*” It is very good to obey, but modesty portrays the obedient heart of the servant. The servant simply obeys—silently—unnoticed. A lady who wears a veil simply and quietly in obedience to her husband exhibits modesty. The woman who draws notice to her “sign of obedience” is more immodest than obedient.

Swinging the pendulum back again, some women who do not dress chastely are not really attempting to be the enchantresses that we might see them as. Again, they are simply trying to be noticed. That is where modesty becomes important. Modesty does not work at being noticed. “*In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; but (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works,*” —1 Timothy 2:9-10. Notice that shamefacedness accompanies modesty and women professing godliness. Shamefacedness seeks to avoid being noticed at all.

It is interesting that we find the words “modest” and “shamefacedness” used here together, since their meanings are so complementary. Modesty seeks to be unnoticed, and shamefacedness means exactly what it says—acting as if ashamed. Remember the saying, “I was so ashamed that I wanted to crawl in a hole and drag it in after me”? That is certainly an attitude that

Are You Serious About Marriage?

wants to be unnoticed, which is what Paul is trying to describe.

Just how important is shamefacedness? Let's go back to Matthew 5:28. *"But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart."* We should remember that when Jesus said this, women wore full, modest robes, usually down to the ground, often with veils which covered their heads, hair and the bottom half of their faces. What were men lusting after? Obviously, clothing did not handle the problem. So, although modest clothing may be of some help in not causing temptation for men, a man must still deal with his own flesh, and no kind of clothing will mask the voice, facial expressions, and body language of a woman who just must be noticed.

Thus, it becomes impossible to legislate modest clothing standards for women. What is modest clothing? What kind of clothing can keep a man's mind pure? What kind of clothing can make a woman modest? Can modesty be attained with a particular dress, style, color, or cut? There are no physical absolutes by which to define modesty. It is attained before God, and Him only. Modesty before God involves far more than clothing, and God's

There are no physical absolutes by which to define modesty. It is attained before God, and Him only. Modesty before God involves far more than clothing, and God's views on modesty have never changed.

Are You Serious About Marriage?

views on modesty have never changed. We find Peter admonishing the Jewish women: *“Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives; while they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear. Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; but let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price. For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands,”* —I Peter 3:1-5. Ah, Peter makes it so clear that apparel cannot substitute for what is needed in a heart attitude.

Modesty—A Heart Issue

So, we see again that modesty is a *heart* issue. A woman could wear a full head and face covering and oversized robes, and yet be immodest! This is not to say that a woman scantily clad could ever be considered modest. That would be rather an oxymoron. The revealing clothes of women reveal their immodest hearts. If a woman’s heart attitude was modest, she would be wearing proper clothing which would reflect a chaste heart, but less revealing clothing is not, unfortunately, proof of a modest heart.

We humans always want to lay down physical standards for spiritual issues. Man wants to focus on externals—cloth and jewelry—but a modest temper cannot spring from certain fabrics and metals, nor can it be legislated by mandates. Again, although

Are You Serious About Marriage?

less clothing is certainly immodest, those who wear more are often immodest also. How can it be? It can be because immodesty is pride, and pride is often impeccably dressed. Those who are proud of their dress standards, length of hair, and personal testimonies are no less immodest than those in short skirts. It is just a different form of immodesty. Feeling special or better is immodest. What we wear makes us no more righteous than the washing of pots and cups.

What Is Modest Clothing?

We often receive sincere calls and letters asking, “What is modest clothing? What should I wear?” Well, the only biblical answer is clothing which does not draw attention to the wearer. Modesty says nothing. It goes unnoticed.

Should a woman dress to conform to her peer group or to God’s Word? Who defines modesty, man or God? A woman should dress according to God’s standards of modesty. How is a woman to know? If she is a child of God, and she sincerely prays about this, God will faithfully answer. Any woman who was preparing for an audience with God would dress appropriately. And yet a believing woman has God’s Holy Spirit living within her. God is with her every moment of every day. She has a constant audience with God. She should be dressed to go *through the day with God*. Because she is His servant, she will not draw attention to herself, but draw attention to HIM. Her clothes will not say, “Look at me.” They will say, “Look at Him.”

Why are women confused? Don’t their husbands know how to counsel them in these matters? Sadly, men seem to be much of the problem. My wife, Susan,

Are You Serious About Marriage?

receives an alarming number of letters from women who desire to dress chastely, but whose husbands desire them to wear tight skirts and tight sweaters in public. In fact, many women say that when they wear a nice jumper or dress, their husbands complain and say, "I don't want you wearing a sack!" The Bible says the marriage bed is undefiled in all things, but when a man's wife goes out in public she is not in the marriage bed! When a man takes his wife out in public, and insists that her dress be provocative, what effects does he expect? Whom does he expect to provoke? Where is his modesty? Men are called to be guides and protectors of their wives. They are responsible for not letting their own passions become stumbling blocks to their wives and others around them.

More Subtle Forms of Immodesty

What about some of the more subtle forms of immodesty? We Christians have so many. What about the annual Christmas letter that recounts how good God was during the year, and itemizes all the prosperous advancements that have been made over the last twelve months? People never share their setbacks and failures. Have you ever received a Christmas letter along these lines?

The Lord has so blessed this year. Dad was fired from his job. Then we got sick and lost our insurance, so we are many thousands of dollars in debt. Praise the Lord! Now we live in a two-room flat with roaches, and we just love it so much! Oh, and by the way, two of our children seem not to care about God at all right now. We just thought it would be nice to share that with you all.

You have never received such a Christmas letter?

Are You Serious About Marriage?

Why? Is God not good when things go bad, or are they just not worth bragging about? Certainly, John Bunyan, who spent twelve years in Bedford Prison, was not being disliked by God during those years. God's love is ongoing. Christmas letters very often veer off into our own possessions and accomplishments.

Few of us probably realize that the big motive to "get more" is not always greed. It is just as often pride or lack of modesty. We do not want more because we need it or even want to really use it. Most of us already have more than we will use or even maintain. We want more because we want to tell others that we have more. We want to be noticed. We like to "mention" who we know, how much we have, or how much we make. Most covetousness is simply immodesty. We would like to be noticed for those things that others have that bring them notice.

Even recounting unexpected blessings attributed totally to God in conversation can be dangerous. I have sometimes wondered after such a conversation whether I was wholly praising God for His goodness, or, in a round-about way, saying, "Look what God did for me." I confess that I am not sure that I do one without a little of the other always creeping in. I am beginning to wonder whether it would not be altogether better to simply praise God for Who He is, and avoid both of the other two completely. In the interest of modesty, my self would be far less likely to be noticed.

I'm sure that each of us can come up with many more of our own similar examples. We can all probably improve greatly upon our modesty. Considering that modesty is the quality which seeks to avoid drawing

Are You Serious About Marriage?

Considering that modesty is the quality which seeks to avoid drawing attention to ourselves, and we know that it is a quality that God would be pleased for us to have, how often do we, men and women, sincerely pray and try to be unnoticed?

attention to ourselves—and knowing that it is a quality that God would be pleased for us to have—how often do we, men and women, sincerely pray and try to be *unnoticed*? When was the last time you tried to be unnoticed? I wonder, if we decided to draw a little less notice, whether He Whom we claim to serve might receive a little more notice. If others are to see Jesus in us, they will not see Him until they do not notice us.

Jeff and Susan

Chapter XIV

Blessed Is the Man Whose Wife Is Happy!

Here we are at the last article on marriage for *In Keeping with the Faith*. So much more to write and only one issue left! I wanted this article to be inspirational, nice, and lighthearted, leaving a sweet taste in my dear readers' mouths. However, these last few months, my own heart has been burdened with the heartbreak of a young woman. Her heartbreak is due to the



sudden realization that her marriage has disintegrated to a point from which it is now not known whether it will be salvaged. From the desperation and despair that now blanket her, only God's grace and truly willing hearts on her part and her husband's can rebuild what is left.

This sad story is one that occurs daily somewhere in our country, more sadly in our church fellowships. The unfortunate truth, though, is that often these women have been quietly sawing through the emotional bonds between themselves and their husbands for years without even knowing it; in fact, they sometimes think that they are quite the Christian women in the process. Their hearts are proud of all they do for the Lord, for their families, for their friends. They cannot understand what is wrong with their husbands. Surely, the problem lies

Are You Serious About Marriage?

with the men to whom they are married. So, after much prayer, I find that I must write not a pleasant article, but one that may step on a few toes. However, if it will help to prevent some marriages from such inadvertent destruction, may the Lord be praised.

Few women ever seem to think their marriages are in danger. Husbands forsaking wives for other women *always* happens to someone else, and will never happen to them. That is why the old cliché says, “The wife is the last to know.” All men, even the strongest Christians, may be strong today, but could weaken tomorrow. “*Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall,*” —1 Corinthians 10:12. Part of our job as helpmeets is to so live before and with our husbands that we help them to remain strong in the face of temptations. It is their job to go out and work in the world, facing all its temptations. It is our job to support them in that effort. The unbelievably sad truth is that very many women are not helpful to their husbands, but present incredible stumbling blocks to those men to whom they are married.

Women Do Not Wish to Be Stumbling Blocks

I honestly believe that many, many women do not wish to be stumbling blocks to their husbands, and they certainly do not consider themselves to be. They would never want their husbands to leave them for another woman, but they do not understand that they give their husbands none of the things for which these men married. Many of these wives have come to the Lord, forsaken outward sins, and made many changes in their lives, which is good, but still do not have a clue on being a true wife to a husband. The very happy and fulfilling

Are You Serious About Marriage?

relationship of being a proper wife whose husband is happy eludes them. Why is this so? It is primarily because they are doing nothing to make the relationship happy and fulfilling for the man whom God gave them to fulfill. Many of these women think that taking care of the house and children is what being a wife is all about. Nothing could be further from the truth.

As we started this series so long ago, we established through God's Word that God's highest calling for a woman is that of being a helpmeet to her husband. This job assignment is not a list of things to do, but is about a relationship between two people. It is about one person, the woman, the helpmeet, meeting the needs of another, the man, her husband. Through much counseling of these confused young women, I have found that they do not understand at all what a man's needs are.

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A Man's Life

Let's visualize, for a few minutes, this high calling from God of being a helpmeet to a husband. A young man leaves his parents to establish his own home. A young woman leaves her home to make the young man's home her home. Together they establish a new home. God instructs them to be fruitful and multiply. They have come together for this purpose, to share a life and

Are You Serious About Marriage?

reproduce themselves in their children. The young man will shoulder the tremendous responsibility of provision for his wife and children. He will go to work every day, and, by the sweat of his brow, he will earn a “living” for



his wife and family. He will endure the hardships of the workplace for one reason—to bring home his paycheck, his living—giving his life for his beloved ones at home. This life, this living, will provide shelter, clothing, food, transportation, and perhaps even a few extras to fluff up his sweet wife’s nest—their nest. He will soon come to the realization, if he did not know at the onset, that his life will be literally spent in supporting this woman and rearing these children. What does he hope to receive in return for this lifelong sacrifice of providing provision? He hopes to see his wife *be happy* with what he struggles to provide. He hopes to partake of the God-given enjoyment of the marriage bed. He hopes to come home, after a long day, to a satisfying meal and a gentle spirit. That is about all he gets in exchange for the giving of his life.

However, many men do not get even that. They come home to disgruntled, complaining wives. Their wives are far too busy with their own thoughts and activities to think about their husbands. They are so busy that they don’t have time to cook good meals, or they are too exhausted to do anything except fall into bed at night and drop off to sleep. A man can become mighty discouraged when his wife is not happy, or does not

Are You Serious About Marriage?

cook for him, or is too busy with her schedule, children, church, or job for his needs. This discouragement often leads to depression or anger. Sometimes, sad to say, he even forsakes his home to look for another woman elsewhere who will meet his needs, and no one is more surprised, or feels more betrayed, than the wife who never had time for him.

Why Isn't His Wife Happy?

Why isn't his wife happy? Why does she never have time for him? Why does she throw temper tantrums, argue, or perceive that she must somehow punish him by giving him the silent treatment? Why must she berate and ridicule him? Possibly there are multiple reasons, but all stem from the root of "self." She may be tired of him spending so much time at work; she may want more than he has been able to provide—perhaps a bigger house, a new couch, or a larger spending allowance. Perhaps she wants to "keep up" with her friends. Maybe she is tired of her household and familial responsibilities and blames him for her mundane life. Maybe she blames him for all her problems in life. Perhaps she indulges in self-pity, lamenting to herself, "If he were only a better husband, had a better job, was a better spiritual leader, was a better father." Perhaps, like so many women of today, she might have taken on too many outside activities in her quest to be known as "Mrs. Do-Gooder," which causes her to be overtired, irritable, and more demanding at home.

What Happens?

What happens when this disgruntled woman's husband returns to his castle at night? This unhappy

Are You Serious About Marriage?

woman is not eagerly awaiting him with a cozy home and nice dinner to reward him for his hard day at work. No, she is ready with her litany of problems and complaints. She is glad he is home so he can take over the kids while she goes out for a break or attends her meeting. She considers his homecoming a change of shift. She demands he help with the laundry, the kids, the housework, the homework, and the list goes on. He grows bitter and more distant. She is angry that he feels that way. “What is his problem?” she murmurs. More and more arguments ensue. He withdraws. She cries, “He doesn’t care.” He grows sick of it all. Where will it end? Most likely in disaster.

How Can a Woman Avoid These Experiences?

First

How can a woman avoid these experiences in her own life, or, if her marriage is at the brink of disaster or already broken, what can she begin to do to restore things? First, she must face her own sin and stop placing blame on her husband. There is to be no pointing of fingers. She must admit to herself and God that she has been a wretched wife. She needs to humbly ask her husband to forgive her for her many failures as a wife, and to please give her another chance as she learns to be a helpful, godly wife.

Second

Second, a godly wife does not read scriptures to her husband that she thinks he needs. A godly wife finds scriptures that she is supposed to live. A godly wife also must come to know and accept her role in the marriage relationship as God designed the marriage relationship

Are You Serious About Marriage?

to be—not as she would like it to be. In very plain English, a woman’s first priority in her married life is to meet her husband’s emotional and physical needs. There is nothing wrong with these needs. They are God-given, normal, healthy needs.

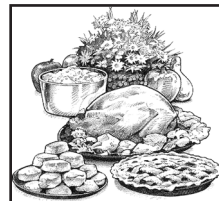
God created appetites, which belong to the husband-wife relationship. If the man has no one to fulfill such needs, he has no wife. He lives at the same address, but he has no wife. Her first step at restoration is to clear her life of all activity and begin

A godly wife does not read scriptures to her husband that she thinks he needs. A godly wife is finding scriptures that she is supposed to live.

to meet her husband’s needs. Her schedule is of no importance at all. Her schedule is HIS schedule! A wife should not be “too tired” when her husband comes home at night. Better that she should skip the trip to Walmart or afternoon activity with friends, and take a nap to be rested for her dear husband. That is her job, to be ready and waiting for her husband. If she fails at this—well, she is a failure as a wife.

Third

Third, one of a woman’s higher goals in her married life is to feed her husband. He has worked hard and looks forward to a good dinner. This is important to a man regardless of how a wife excuses it. We only have to read the book of Ecclesiastes to be reminded that “Behold that which I have seen: it is



Are You Serious About Marriage?

good and comely for one to eat and to drink, and to enjoy the good of all his labour that he taketh under the sun all the days of his life, which God giveth him: for it is his portion,” —Ecclesiastes 5:18.

If the wife is too busy to prepare real meals for her husband, she does not really care about him. It used to be said that the way to a man’s heart was through his stomach. The women of our generation seem not to know this. They expect a man to be satisfied with scrambled eggs, hot dogs, TV-dinners, or fast food. He is not. He may not complain because he can no longer bear the whining and litany of excuses that the subject evokes. However, this is not what he envisioned when he married his wife. He is disappointed. He thought they would have delicious meals, and happy times together around the dinner table.

Fourth

Fourth, the husband would like to enjoy a little fun time with his wife. All men have a “little boy” living



in them, just the same as we women have a “little girl” living in us. It is still fun to watch a sunset, walk along the shoreline, occasionally giggle and just enjoy each other. The Bible exhorts the man to enjoy the wife of his

youth. What a shame that today, the wives of men’s youth often no longer exist for them because they simply don’t want to be. They are too full of complaining attitudes or too tired from all their busyness!

Are You Serious About Marriage?

Fifth

Fifth, the man would like his home to be clean and neat, and his children orderly and well-behaved. Think about it. What man, after a hard day at work, looks forward to coming home to no dinner on the table, a cranky wife, a messy house, and screaming kids? It is hard to believe that so many men endure these difficult situations for years. Women are home keepers. Women are nurturers, the primary child-care givers, the ones who spend the most hours in the home and with the children.



This home keeping and child rearing are primarily the wife's responsibility. Yes, the father is the patriarch and bears ultimate responsibility for his family. He is the leader and guide. His wife should keep his home and discipline his children according to his instructions, not leave half or most of the job for him to do when he arrives home at night. Tell me, dear woman, if you were to come before a review board for a rating, how would you fare? Would you be deserving of a "job well done"?

Last

Last, a man may endure the barbs, taunts, and injustices of the world, but there is one place where he expects to be accepted, welcomed, and even a little doted upon; and there is one person who can make that possible. In the world, in the workplace, he will be criticized, trodden upon, and perhaps rejected. He does not want to come home to a wife who is going to be dissatisfied with him or give him more of the same.

So many women feel justified with their list of gripes.

Are You Serious About Marriage?

Each somehow feels that she has the right to complain or the right to point out her husband's lengthy list of sins. "He just isn't a spiritual leader. He is not the best father. He leaves his dirty clothes around. He doesn't cut the grass when he should. He snores. He has sin in his life." On and on the list goes. Dear woman, stop criticizing. First, you are not a spiritual wife, because a spiritual wife would not complain or keep a mental list of her husband's failings, let alone ever verbalize them to him or to others. Second, you are not perfect either. Your husband probably has an equal list, if not longer, of his gripes about you. A critical spirit is just not part of a wife's job.

When I hear a woman say, "My husband just doesn't love me anymore," my first thoughts are, "Why? How have you become unlovable?" and, "How did you kill the love he once had for you?" When I hear, "What is he looking for that I don't give him?" I can assure you that the list is usually long. Many women tend to put magnifying glasses on the failings of their husbands while each rests comfortably upon her own heap of inadequacies as if she had none. Our husbands did not marry us for us to point out their flaws. We, ourselves, are wretched, wicked sinners. Oh, that we would keep our tongues and magnify our husbands' good traits! If we could do so, we might just develop the hearts of gratitude and thanksgiving that we are supposed to have toward them.

Basically, the above list sums up men's major needs. Pretty simple, huh? They require no money, no talent, no beauty, and no super high IQ's. How many women do you know personally who really love their husbands,

Are You Serious About Marriage?

feed their husbands, have fun with their husbands, keep well-ordered homes for their husbands, and always have a good word to say about their husbands? How about you? *Do you really* meet your husband's emotional and physical needs, prepare good meals, have fun with him, and not complain? *God knows the truth about you and so does your husband.* We can fool others, but never them.

What Does It Take?

What does it take for a woman to fulfill her role/job in the marriage relationship? All it takes is a woman who will do the job God has given her. You see, that is what a godly woman is: one who does the job God has assigned woman. It is not attending church, wearing dresses, or doing as much as possible for others. It is being a woman who cares for her husband and gives him and his home her highest priority. There are no earthly excuses not to do these things. There are only six things listed, and *every* woman can do them regardless of whether she is married to a believer or unbeliever, a spiritual or unspiritual husband, a nice guy or a nasty guy. Our wonderful God in Heaven, our heavenly Father, made provision for each woman to be able to do the job He has given her. It is dependent only on her and not on her husband. God gave every woman the same opportunity to be a good and true helpmeet.

I am a woman, and I never thought I could or would say this, but I sincerely believe that a woman is primarily responsible for the state of her marriage. After talking with and observing countless women over a period of forty years, I know not one woman who has totally lost herself in making her husband the center of her life

Are You Serious About Marriage?

and meeting his needs. Why? The primary reasons are selfishness and the fact that there is no recognition in being a helpmeet. After all, who will know about it? Only God and her husband.

Every Woman I Know Is Seeking More

Every woman I know is seeking *more* than being a helpmeet, which always results in being *less* of a helpmeet. Women insist on their way of doing things, their so-called spiritual insights, their way of life, where they should live, attend church, and more. They have their hobbies, their friends, their phone conversations, or their activities. Even under the guise of ministry, they seek to be teachers of other women, conference speakers, or writers. They have their e-mail loops and discussion groups, which sometimes take up hours of each day. They are thinking about all they are doing, or will do, or will write. Often, a woman's true ministries, her husband and children, become completely clouded over by other things in her life. These other things are at the center of her life, which is where her husband should be.

I'm not saying that a woman can never do other things. It is just that she must be sure she is fulfilling her highest calling to the satisfaction of God and her husband. A husband will not mind if his wife gives a "helping hand" to someone in need. And certainly she will need to be involved in some activities that will help her family grow and prosper. And if her husband and family are well cared for, there might even be a little time for something else.

Each Woman Must Choose

Each woman has it within her power to yield herself solely to God, and to become the woman, the helpmeet, God intended a woman to be. She must choose between that and the quest for “self.” “What about your rights?” “You don’t want to be a doormat, do you?” “You don’t want to be his servant, do you?” “You need to enjoy a few of the good things in life, don’t you?” *“Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends,”* —John 15:13. *“Whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant,”* —Matthew 20:26-27. *“Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren,”* —I John 3:16.

Do We Not Believe Jesus?

Do we not believe Jesus, the Son of God, is speaking the Word of Truth to us in these passages? We would be soooooo happy if we would walk in the steps of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. If we would abandon our lives, if we would stop seeking for our own happiness, and seek to make our husbands happy, we would be happy too!



In my earlier, feminist days, in the first days after I became a Christian and began to read His Word, I thought I would rather die a thousand deaths than to humble myself and become submissive to a man. How could God require that of woman? Earnestly I prayed, “Lord, help my unbelief. I am willing to obey You; please make me willing to obey my husband.” It

Are You Serious About Marriage?

was the start of a long journey, and I can attest to you that our heavenly Father, our wonderful Creator, does know best! He made us, and therefore *knows* what will make us happy. We can trust Him. He is worthy! We are to lose ourselves in helping our husbands, meeting their physical needs, cooking for them, and being that special woman that a man looks forward to coming home to each night. A man's home is his little castle, his little haven, his refuge, his resting place from the strife of the world. It should be cozy, warm, bright, and cheerful. His wife should be happy, happy, happy. *Blessed is the man who comes home to a happy wife.*

Oh, I can hear it now. Countless readers are saying, "But, I want to do *important* work. I want to make a difference in the church, in the world." That is Satan's deceptive lie. Dear friends, God has given you *important* work. Taking care of our husbands *is* important work. Nothing is more important. If it were so, God would have told us in His Word. Taking care of and helping our husbands by meeting their needs and rearing their children is, in part, rearing the next generation for God. Eternal lives are at stake. There is nothing more important than that. And so again, *Blessed is the man who comes home to a happy wife!*

Are you a happy wife of a happy husband? Does that description fit you? If it does not, and you find yourself failing in many of the aforementioned areas, you can change now. It is easy enough. Quit complaining, griping, expressing dissatisfaction, or pitying yourself by saying or thinking, "Oh, if he were only this or that."



Are You Serious About Marriage?

SIN! SIN! SIN! It is all sin. Fall on your knees and repent and beg God for forgiveness. Most often, a woman betrays God and her husband for years before the man finally breaks and betrays her. Who has the greater sin? *Woe unto us who cause our brother (husband) to stumble.* We so frequently hear that the man sinned and left his wife, but I ask you, “How can a man leave what he does not have?”

“For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works.” — Matthew 16:25-27.

Dear sisters, lose your life! For what shall it profit you if you lose your soul or your marriage? The Son of Man shall reward you according to your works, and your husband will respond to you according to your works. Will they be the works that seek personal fulfillment in this life, or will they be the works of a godly, happy helpmeet?

Susan

Are You Serious About Marriage?

A Closing Thought

Dear friends, I sincerely hope you will keep this little book on marriage and put it in a safe place to take out and occasionally read again. It would be wonderful if we could retain everything we read, and better still, put it into practice, but since this seldom happens for me, and I suspect the same for you, let these articles become friendly reminders to stay on the path of being a godly helpmeet. I still read them again and again, for I, too, must still be about the task my heavenly Father gave me, that of being the wife of a happy husband.

Susan



Are You Serious About Marriage?

More Resources

A Little of This and a Little of That, by Susan Zakula

Do you have questions about living the Christian life? Would you like to find out how to strengthen your marriage and build a closer relationship with your husband? Do you wonder what more you could do to rear your children for the Lord, and at the same time build closer family ties in a world that wants to pull the family apart? Do you ever feel overstressed, as in having too much to do, and just can't seem to put all the priorities in order? You will find answers to these issues and many more in *A Little of This and a Little of That*.

Volume 1 contains a Bible study on meekness and articles on marriage, child rearing, living for Christ, poems, and lots of other things to inspire and encourage you. Read it slowly; there are many things over which to mull and savor and enjoy. It is a life changer! I know, for these things have changed my own life.

Joy of Womanhood, by Susan Zakula

Have you ever wondered where your joy went? Or perhaps you have never felt joy, real joy in who you are and joy in your life. If so, this Bible study will help you discover joy that is lasting. It is a fifty-two week Bible study delving into the very core issues of womanhood and the essence of joy. It is in a workbook format, so take pen in hand and begin! Perfect for ladies! Bible Studies, lessons for teens, or a mother-daughter study.

Joy of Obedience, by Susan Zakula

Have you ever discovered the joy of obedience? Or are you stuck in the misery of self-will, having things your way? Do you go through your days with a song in your heart, radiating cheerfulness and joy, or do you stumble through, complaining and griping, and have a less than happy

existence? If you are tired of the old ways and are ready for a change, a delightful change, which will bring joy to your heart and life, choose the *Joy of Obedience* your next Bible study! You will be a changed woman, I promise you! This Bible study is perfect for groups, mother-daughters, or a personal study. Begin yours soon.

Little Keepers at Home
Keepers of the Faith for Girls

If you have daughters or granddaughters, please encourage them to discover the joy of being a girl by learning to be keepers at home. The *Little Keepers* and *Keepers of the Faith for Girls* handbooks are filled with practical knowledge, encourage Christian character, and inspire godly habits. Start now to prepare your girls to be all God would have them to be!

All of the above are available from Keepers of the Faith.

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