



# **foundations** of marriage

transformation through truth

# marriage

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# Foundations of marriage

## Introduction

### The purpose of this course

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This course is not intended to be a marriage course or a course to prepare for marriage, although we will be covering much of the material which would be included in such a course. The purpose of this course is to inform members of Joshua Generation Church about the way the elders of this church see God's plan for marriage and family. As such, we believe that this reflects basic Christianity and that all believers will recognise and agree with what is taught. The challenge is to live it out in an authentic way to bring glory to our King!!

Over the past 12 years or more we, as elders and other leaders of Joshua Generation, have made every effort to study and live out the scriptures, and to teach and in every way encourage others to do so as well. We have read extensively and attended many courses on this topic. This material is the fruit of our combined efforts, and is obviously influenced by excellent material from various sources. If anyone recognises material that they feel should be acknowledged as being someone's original work, we would value being made aware of this so that we can obtain the necessary permission for using it.

Some of you are not married at this time. You may be young and single, eagerly anticipating the adventure of marriage. You may be older and still hoping to find that special someone. Some of you have been married and have found yourselves without your partner because of death or divorce. Others do not wish to marry at all.

We believe that the material covered in this course is relevant to all of you. This is partly because, as a member of the Church of Jesus Christ, you will find yourself needing to explain God's perfect plan for family to someone who does not know it, or to encourage someone to hold fast to the teachings of the Bible when they are tempted to go astray. Regardless of whatever position you find yourself right now, you may find yourself in another season, where you need to go back time after time to ensure that you are on course as an obedient servant, displaying God's ways to a world that longs to see examples of people really living for Him.

Besides, each one of you, married or unmarried, with or without children, is part of a household. The biblical concept of household includes the extended family, servants and even animals. It is in this context of family that we live out our faith. Whatever your household looks like right now, you will have ample opportunity to practice hospitality and many other Godly qualities as well!

If you find that you are in need of more specific, direct assistance than we offer during this course, we urge you to contact your home group leaders or elders. Our leaders are men and women who have demonstrated their commitment to living God's way. They have overcome difficulties of many kinds in their own lives. They have had years of experience in helping people deal with the many challenges of life. They will be able to help you if you are willing to change.

From time to time and according to need we run various courses that deal specifically with marriage preparation or enrichment, or deal with some of the other topics in more detail. Never miss out on an opportunity to grow and become more skilled!

# God's plan for marriage

Over the last 10 years it has been the elders' privilege to marry well over a hundred couples, and to be part of their preparations for marriage and the special day when they stand in front of friends and family, God and heavenly witnesses to make their vows. Much preparation goes into this joyous celebration.

Sometimes the couple, and especially the bride, is so caught up in the dress, the flowers, the candles and table decorations, that they do not give enough attention to the seriousness of their promises to one another.

Apart from salvation, who you choose to marry will be the most significant decision you will make.

God says that the act of marriage makes the two one flesh. So you are no longer two, but one.

And so begins a journey of adjusting to one another as a married couple, and building a home and a life together. Men and women are so different it is almost a joke that they have to learn to live and work together in such close proximity. God's plan is that the two will bring different elements to the partnership, to form something new and effective in His Kingdom. This takes time and much negotiation as the couple sift through their expectations and experiences and decide how they will live together. It is important to remember that this is not a competition, as you are both on the same team. If things go well with one, it will go well with the other, but if things go badly with one, both will suffer.

## Good and bad motives for marriage

Do you recognise any of the following from your own life, or the lives of others?

- I have been planning my wedding day since I was 4 years old. I have been dreaming of being a princess in a beautiful dress, the centre of attention, with all our friends and family.
- We are not able to control ourselves sexually.
- It makes financial sense – it costs more to run two households, and travel costs a lot in time and petrol money.
- She is pregnant.
- We want to have children.
- I want someone to love me and take care of me.
- Everyone else is getting married and I don't want to be left out.
- I feel sorry for him/her. I am trying to help them.
- I can make him/her into a better person.
- I was in a relationship and it broke up, so I want to feel wanted again, or I want make my previous partner jealous.
- All our friends and family say we should get married.
- We have prayed about it and spoken to our leaders and to our friends and family. We believe that it is right for us to marry.
- We want to express our sexuality in a godly way.

- We are best friends and cannot imagine living apart from each other.
- We want to serve God as a couple and bring glory to his name.

If you married for immature or selfish reasons or because of outside pressure, you can still make your marriage a success. Love is a decision, and as you grow in God you can transform your relationship into something beautiful in God's sight.

## Pictures of marriage

1. Leon van Daele shared this helpful picture of marriage:

If we see marriage as a bowl of attractive fruit, colourful to look at, delicious to eat, with each partner picking out what he or she needs, one day we will be disappointed to find the bowl empty.

But if we see marriage as a field in which each partner works, planting, weeding, feeding and watering, they will continue to enjoy the rich variety of fruit provided in abundance as long as they live.

2. Proverbs talks about a wise woman building her house, but a foolish one tearing her home down with her own hands. (Proverbs 14:1-3) Metaphorically, brick by brick, by our actions and what we say, we construct our own future in which we will live.

You will get the marriage you deserve!

3. In Deuteronomy we read of a picture of God's plan for us if we walk in OBEDIENCE. These are not promises but principles. When we obey God and do things His way, we walk in His blessing.

*"If you fully obey the LORD your God and carefully follow all his commands I give you today, the LORD your God will set you high above all the nations on earth. All these blessings will come upon you and accompany you if you obey the LORD your God:*

*You will be blessed in the city and blessed in the country.*

*The fruit of your womb will be blessed, and the crops of your land and the young of your livestock—the calves of your herds and the lambs of your flocks.*

*Your basket and your kneading trough will be blessed.*

*You will be blessed when you come in and blessed when you go out.*

*The LORD will grant that the enemies who rise up against you will be defeated before you. They will come at you from one direction but flee from you in seven.*

*The LORD will send a blessing on your barns and on everything you put your hand to. The LORD your God will bless you in the land he is giving you.*

*The LORD will establish you as his holy people, as he promised you on oath, if you keep the commands of the LORD your God and walk in his ways. Then all the peoples on earth will see that you are called by the name of the LORD, and they will fear you. The LORD will grant you abundant prosperity—in the fruit of your womb, the young of your livestock and the crops of your ground—in the land he swore to your forefathers to give you.*

*The LORD will open the heavens, the storehouse of his bounty, to send rain on your land in season and to bless all the work of your hands. You will lend to many nations but will borrow from none. The LORD will make you the head, not the tail. If you pay attention to the commands of the LORD your God that I give you this day and carefully follow them, you will always be at the top, never at the bottom. Do not turn aside from any of the commands I give you today, to the right or to the left, following other gods and serving them."*

4. In Song of Solomon, the marriage relationship is likened, amongst other things, to a delightful garden.

*Lover*

*"You are a garden locked up, my sister, my bride; you are a spring enclosed, a sealed fountain.*

*Your plants are an orchard of pomegranates with choice fruits, with henna and nard, nard and saffron, calamus and cinnamon, with every kind of incense tree, with myrrh and aloes and all the finest spices. You are a garden fountain, a well of flowing water streaming down from Lebanon."*

*Beloved*

*Awake, north wind, and come, south wind! Blow on my garden, that its fragrance may spread abroad. Let my lover come into his garden and taste its choice fruits." Song of Solomon 4:12-16*

5. God uses the marriage relationship as a picture of His relationship with the church.

*"I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband." Revelation 21:1-3*

## Covenant

Marriage is not designed for perfect people, which is just as well, because there aren't any. When we make our vows we are entering into a partnership which will continue through this life, but which ceases to exist upon the death of either of the parties. We agree to walk together, loving and supporting one another in a unique way.

Marriage is not just a contract between two people, it is a special kind of binding promise made before God, friends and family, and spirit beings.

God is a covenant maker and a covenant keeper. Without a covenant, there can be no relationship with God; and without a sacrifice, there can be no covenant.

Marriage is successful when each person has set their heart on pleasing God and doing things His way. This means dying to self and serving one another in every way. As we do this we will become more like our God who left heaven to live among men and serve them, even dying for them. An obedient servant of God seeks His will when making decisions.

God Himself is an active part of our marriages.

"Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work:

*If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up! Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone? Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken."* Ecclesiastes 4:9-12

A cord made of three strands is the strongest, because each strand is in contact with both other strands. Two strands can break, but the cord will hold because of the third strand. This is a beautiful picture of marriage where God Himself holds everything together, so long as we stay in Him.

*" His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness."* 2 Peter 1:3

It is a good idea to study covenant in detail, to enhance your understanding of marriage, and also of God's role in your life.

## Some examples of covenant

### David and Jonathan

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*" After David had finished talking with Saul, Jonathan became one in spirit with David, and he loved him as himself. From that day Saul kept David with him and did not let him return to his father's house. And Jonathan made a covenant with David because he loved him as himself. Jonathan took off the robe he was wearing and gave it to David, along with his tunic, and even his sword, his bow and his belt. 1 Samuel 18:1-4*

The gifts that Jonathan gave to David were symbols of his complete commitment to him:

- Robe/cloak – wealth
- Garment – possessions
- Sword and bow – strength
- Belt/girdle – protection of life giving parts

He was promising to protect and care for David as he would for himself. If David needed anything, Jonathan would provide it for him.

### God and Abram

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*After this, the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision:*

*"Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your very great reward."*

*But Abram said, " O Sovereign LORD, what can you give me since I remain childless and the one who will inherit my estate is Eliezer of Damascus?" And Abram said, "You have given me no children; so a servant in my household will be my heir." Then the word of the LORD came*

to him: "This man will not be your heir, but a son coming from your own body will be your heir." He took him outside and said, "Look up at the heavens and count the stars - if indeed you can count them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be."

Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness.

He also said to him, "I am the LORD, who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to take possession of it." But Abram said, "O Sovereign LORD, how can I know that I will gain possession of it?" So the LORD said to him, "Bring me a heifer, a goat and a ram, each three years old, along with a dove and a young pigeon."

Abram brought all these to him, cut them in two and arranged the halves opposite each other; the birds, however, he did not cut in half. Then birds of prey came down on the carcasses, but Abram drove them away.

As the sun was setting, Abram fell into a deep sleep, and a thick and dreadful darkness came over him. Then the LORD said to him, "Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own, and they will be enslaved and mistreated four hundred years. But I will punish the nation they serve as slaves, and afterward they will come out with great possessions. You, however, will go to your fathers in peace and be buried at a good old age. In the fourth generation your descendants will come back here, for the sin of the Amorites has not yet reached its full measure."

When the sun had set and darkness had fallen, a smoking firepot with a blazing torch appeared and passed between the pieces. On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram and said, "To your descendants I give this land ..."  
Genesis 15

"The one who enters a covenant enters into it by death. As long as the person remains alive, he is not in covenant. The death of the sacrificed animal is physical, but it symbolises another form of death for the one who offers the sacrifice and passes through the pieces. As each party passes through the pieces of the sacrifice, he says, in effect, to the other: "If need be, I will die for you. From now on, your needs take preference over my own. If I have anything you need but cannot supply, then my supply becomes your supply. I no longer live for myself, I live for you." ("The Marriage Covenant" by Derek Prince, 1978. Pg 43,44)

In God's sight, this act of making covenant is no empty ritual. In Genesis 22 we see God asking Abraham for the life of his son, Isaac, the son He had promised him. Abraham was willing to make this sacrifice, trusting in the goodness of God for the outcome, and God stopped him just in time, providing a substitute. Two thousand years later, we see God fulfilling His side of the covenant.

To meet the need of Abraham and his descendants, God offered up His only Son. But this time there was no last minute reprieve. On the cross, Jesus laid down His life as the full price of redemption for Abraham and all his descendants."

"So solemn, so total, and so irrevocable is the commitment that is made in a covenant." ("The Marriage Covenant" by Derek Prince, 1978. Pg 45)

## The purpose of marriage

### To bring glory to God

The Bible says that marriage is a picture of the relationship between Jesus and his bride, the Church. When our marriage is healthy and strong we are a living example of the love and intimacy everyone longs for.

*"Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ."*

*Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.*

*Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church for we are members of his body. "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh." This is a profound mystery-but I am talking about Christ and the church. However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband." Ephesians 5:21 - 33*

### To grow us into the image of God

*It is God's plan that we do not remain childish, but that we grow up and mature, becoming like Him. This happens when we deal with our selfish nature and choose to serve one another sacrificially.*

*As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another." Proverbs 27:17*

*"It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.*

*Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work." Ephesians 4:11 - 16*

*"My dear children, for whom I am again in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you," Galatians 4:19*

## Intimacy

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God originally instituted marriage because he knew that man needed companionship.

*"The LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him."*

*Now the LORD God had formed out of the ground all the beasts of the field and all the birds of the air. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds of the air and all the beasts of the field.*

*But for Adam no suitable helper was found. So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and closed up the place with flesh. Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man.*

*The man said, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman,' for she was taken out of man." For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh. The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame." Genesis 2:18 - 25*

*"Haven't you read," he replied, "that at the beginning the Creator 'made them male and female,' and said, 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh? So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate.'" Matthew 19:4-6*

This kind of unity involves the physical, emotional and spiritual parts.

## Godly offspring

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It is part of God's plan for children to be trained in his ways in a family, where they will see a living example of the loving relationship between God and man, where they can be cared for and corrected when necessary.

*"Another thing you do: You flood the LORD's altar with tears. You weep and wail because he no longer pays attention to your offerings or accepts them with pleasure from your hands. You ask, "Why?" It is because the LORD is acting as the witness between you and the wife of your youth, because you have broken faith with her, though she is your partner, the wife of your marriage covenant.*

*Has not the LORD made them one? In flesh and spirit they are his. And why one? Because he was seeking godly offspring. So guard yourself in your spirit, and do not break faith with the wife of your youth.*

*"I hate divorce," says the LORD God of Israel, "and I hate a man's covering himself with violence as well as with his garment," says the LORD Almighty. So guard yourself in your spirit, and do not break faith" Malachi 2:13 -16*

*"For the unbelieving husband has been sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife has been sanctified through her believing husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy." 1 Corinthians 7:14*

## Home and family

The biblical concept of a household includes everyone who lives under one roof – extended family and servants. In this passage we see that managing one's household well is seen as an indication that a man will be able to take care of the church. God's plan is for people to live in family groups. This is a safe place for deep and lasting relationships, a sharing of dreams and a reaching for goals.

*Here is a trustworthy saying: If anyone sets his heart on being an overseer, he desires a noble task. Now the overseer must be above reproach, the husband of but one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect. (If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?) He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil. He must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil's trap.*

*Deacons, likewise, are to be men worthy of respect, sincere, not indulging in much wine, and not pursuing dishonest gain. They must keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience. They must first be tested; and then if there is nothing against them, let them serve as deacons.*

*In the same way, their wives are to be women worthy of respect, not malicious talkers but temperate and trustworthy in everything.*

*A deacon must be the husband of but one wife and must manage his children and his household well. Those who have served well gain an excellent standing and great assurance in their faith in Christ Jesus." 1 Timothy 3:1-13*

*"God sets the lonely in families" Psalm 68:6*

**Married people**, the challenge for you is to open your home to the lonely and needy and to be family for those who do not have family, or who come from dysfunctional families.

**Single people**, the challenge for you is to form healthy relationships with married couples and other singles and to be family with them.

**Older singles**, you can be grandparents and parents to an unparented generation, where children have been brought up in crèches as their parents struggle to make ends meet.

**Younger singles**, you can be aunties and uncles to children whose parents are busy with the things that consumes our lives. You can find parents amongst the older members of the church to guide you and help you to grow.

Make room in your hearts for your church family. You will not regret it.

*Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.  
Galatians 6:7-10*

*And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones because he is my disciple, I tell you the truth, he will certainly not lose his reward." Matthew 10:42*

# Roles in marriage

## Knowing your role

When two people get married, they come together with all kinds of expectations of home and family. These expectations are formed while they are growing up. A person assumes that the way things were done in their home is the normal way of doing things. If the couple have grown up in similar households, with a common culture, it will be easier for them to establish their own household. These days, however, people of very different backgrounds may find it challenging to decide how they will do things in their new family. A process of negotiation begins, where they need to discuss how things will work, and come to some decisions.

It does not really matter who does the dishes or takes out the rubbish so long as each is doing a fair share. It is better for the more able person to do the finances, or change the light bulbs. If both husband and wife enjoy cooking or shopping, then they can share the chores depending on who has the time or desire to do it. Of course many household jobs are routine and can become boring and mundane. All these times we choose to serve one another in love.

Whatever you decide, you may need to make further adjustments as your circumstances change. Perhaps somebody's work situation changes, or a baby joins the household.

However, the Bible is clear that God intends that the husband should be the head of the household.

This means that authority in the home is delegated to him.

*"Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.*

*Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church - for we are members of his body." For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh." This is a profound mystery-but I am talking about Christ and the church. However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband." Ephesians 5:22-23*

**HUSBAND:** The husband is called to be the leader. He is responsible for making good decisions for his family. The husband must seek God for direction and ensure that he knows what is pleasing to God.

The husband is to **love her** and take care of her in the same way as he cares for his own body.

He must **consider her** and make sure that he provides an environment in which she can feel safe and grow into everything that God wants her to be.

The husband is the **provider**. He is ultimately responsible to ensure that his family is provided for in terms of physical needs. In these difficult financial times many women work to help their husbands. However, even if the wife earns more than the husband, he should still make the final decisions in terms of their budget.

*"If anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for his immediate family, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever." 1 Timothy 5:8*

The husband **protects** his family. It is his task to ensure that they are safe. This includes physical safety in terms of locked doors and window bars, as well as safety in terms of emotion and spiritual elements.

The husband is the head of the relationship. He is responsible for the state of his family. He serves as prophet, priest, king and shepherd in the family.

- **Prophet:** He seeks God and speaks God's heart to his family.
- **Priest:** Represents his family to God.
- **King:** Rules his family for God.
- **Shepherd:** Guides and protects his family IN THE NAME OF HIS GOD.

However, men often abdicate their responsibility and let their wives take their place.

*"Youths oppress my people, women rule over them. O my people, your guides lead you astray; they turn you from the path." Isaiah 3:12*

This is not God's order.

A husband has a right to his wife that no other person has. This is balanced by great responsibility. When couples "live together" or even just "sleep together", they are taking **marital privileges** without **marital responsibilities**. This causes pain and devastation, disappointment, disillusionment and children who feel the devastation of abandonment. When a man divorces his wife it causes similar tragedy for everyone. He is an unfaithful and unreliable man.

**WIFE:** The wife is called to **submit** to her husband in the same way as the church submits to Jesus. The difficult thing is to trust her husband to have her best interests at heart. Over time, if he behaves in a trustworthy way, she will find it easier to trust him. It is also easier for a woman to trust a man who is under authority. A woman will find it easier to follow a man who fears God and sets his heart on pleasing Him, who honours and obeys the leaders over him in the church, a man who honours his boss and keeps the laws of the country.

The wife must respect her husband. She must look up to him and treat him as her leader.

A woman who feels unsafe and unloved will operate in fear and insecurity. She will try to take control through open or passive rebellion, manipulation through tears or temper, threats or withholding sex. This kind of behaviour opens up a demonic foothold in your relationship.

## Authority and submission

### Submission begins with God himself

*John 5:19-20 "Jesus gave them this answer: "I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can only do what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does. For the Father loves the Son and shows him all he does."*

We think that the person who must submit, lay down their will, their life, their dreams must surely be inferior or of less value than the one who must take responsibility, make decisions and lead. This is a good example of our ways not being the same as God's ways.

**Why is it an issue?** Because we understand submission in terms of a pecking order, where the person at the top has the highest status. We forget that in the kingdom of God, this structure is reversed.

*And Jesus called them to him and said to them, "You know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." Mark 10:42-45*

Clearly we can see that being in submission does not mean taking a position of lower value.

### Who must submit?

- Jesus and the Holy Spirit submit to the Father. (Hebrews 5:7-9 "Jesus was heard because of his reverent submission)
- The Church must submit to Christ.

*"Now as the Church submits to Christ" Ephesians 5:24*

- Wives must submit to their own husbands. (Ephesians 5:22 "Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord.")

*"Wives, submit to your husbands as is fitting in the Lord." Colossians 3:18*

*Wives, in the same way be submissive to your husbands so that if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behaviour of their wives when they see the purity and reverence of your lives."  
1 Peter 3:1-2*

- Children must submit to their own parents.

*"Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord." Colossians 3:20*

- Slaves and servants must submit to their own masters.

*"Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything" Colossians 3: 22*

*"Teach slaves to be subject to their masters in everything..." Titus 2:9*

*"Slaves, submit yourselves to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and considerate, but also to those who are harsh." 1 Peter 2:18*

- The people in a church must submit to their leaders.

*"Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you." Hebrews 13:17*

- Christians must submit to one another, especially the younger to the older.

*"Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ." Ephesians 5:21*

*"Young men, in the same way be submissive to those who are older." 1 Peter 5:5*

- The people in a country must submit to the government of that country.

*"Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities..." Romans 13:1*

## Why is submission so important?

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The authority in each case exists for the protection and care of the one submitting.

God loves order. He is very creative, but in all the abundance of colour and texture in our world, God has kept to certain rules which provide order.

*"When he entered Capernaum, a centurion came forward to him, appealing to him, "Lord, my servant is lying paralyzed at home, suffering terribly." And he said to him, "I will come and heal him." But the centurion replied,*

*"Lord, I am not worthy to have you come under my roof, but only say the word, and my servant will be healed.*

*For I too am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. And I say to one, 'Go,' and he goes, and to another,*

*'Come,' and he comes, and to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it." When Jesus heard this, he marveled and said to those who followed him, "Truly, I tell you, with no one in Israel have I found such faith. I tell you, many will come from east and west and recline at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, while the sons of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." And to the centurion Jesus said, "Go; let it be done for you as you have believed." And the servant was healed at that very moment." Matthew 8:5-13*

*And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." Matthew 28:18-20*

God has instituted CHAINS OF AUTHORITY. All authority begins with God. Authority is then delegated from person to person. For example:

- **School:** Principal - Deputy Principal – Head of Department – Teacher – Children
- **Family:** God – Father – Mother – Children
- **Church:** God – Elders - Home group leaders – people

It is important to know WHERE you stand in this chain in various situations. What your responsibility is and what your responsibility is not. Once you know your role, and the roles of others, you can live free of much of the stress and anxiety which you carry unnecessarily.

Honour and respect those to whom you owe it. Care for and guide those for whom you are responsible.

## Common goals

There can only be one captain. It is his job to make the decisions and set up a game plan. The rest of the players all have their specific place. The team cannot win if the players do not carry out their own responsibilities. What would we think of a team where each person was playing their own game? If you are supposed to be defending, it is not helpful to be out front trying to score. What if the team members trip each other up or stab each other in the back? As a team player, it is your responsibility to play your part to your very best.

### PRACTICALLY, WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

Mothers, teach your children to honour and obey their father, and to respect and honour authority figures – teachers, church leaders, policemen, etc. You will live in the blessing of their submission to authority.

The Bible tells us that there is no authority other than that given by God.

*“Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves. For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and he will commend you. For he is God’s servant to do you good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword for nothing. He is God’s servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer. Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also because of conscience.” Romans 13:1-5*

**DOES THIS MEAN THE HUSBAND ALWAYS GETS HIS WAY?** Yes.

**DOES THIS MEAN THE WIFE DOESN'T GET TO HAVE A SAY?** No – it is her duty to give her perspective – and then leave it in his hands.

### AUTHORITY IS DELEGATED. WE HAVE AUTHORITY BECAUSE WE ARE UNDER AUTHORITY

*“And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always even, to the end of the age.” Matthew 28:18-20*

*"And he called to him his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every disease and every affliction." Matthew 10:1*

*"I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and his incomparably great power for those who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength, which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way." Ephesians 1:18-23*

*"Although I am less than the least of all God's people, this grace was given to me: to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches in Christ, and to make plain to everyone the administration of this mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things. His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, according to his eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord." Ephesians 3:8-11*

AUTHORITY IS EXERCISED FOR THE GOOD OF THE PERSON UNDER IT.

*"For this reason I write these things while I am away from you, that when I come I may not have to be severe in my use of the authority that the Lord has given me for building up and not for tearing down." 2 Corinthians 13:10*

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## Why do we find submission so hard?

- **Selfishness** – flesh – what about me? I also have good ideas.
- **Lack of trust** – if we have been abandoned, neglected or abused by authority figures it is hard to trust them.
- **Fear** – what if he gets it wrong?

Fear and lack of trust make us want to CONTROL the situation so that we won't get hurt.

If we lack power, we resort to the ungodly method of MANIPULATION.

**The answer is to trust God.** He promises to be your provider, your protector and that he will never leave you nor forsake you.

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## How should we submit?

*"Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them. Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord. Fathers, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged. Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything, not only when their eye is on you and to win their favour, but with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord. Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving. Anyone who does wrong will be repaid for his wrong, and there is no favouritism." Colossians 3:18-25*

- There are two words used in the Greek for a similar concept (using Strong's Dictionary with number reference):
- Children and servants must obey (5219) their parents and masters, but wives must submit to (5293) their own husbands.
- 5293: be subject, put under, obey
- 5219: hear under (as a subordinate), that is, to listen attentively; by implication to heed or conform to a command or authority: - hearken, be obedient to, obey.
- The one is to obey a command, in contrast to a position in which we live.

Let's look at some more Scriptures:

*"Slaves are to be submissive to their own masters in everything; they are to be well-pleasing, not argumentative, not pilfering, but showing all good faith, so that in everything they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior." Titus 2:9-10*

So then, how should we submit?

#### **WHOLEHEARTEDLY.**

*And whatever you do, do it heartily, i.e. with your whole heart, not reluctantly, as to the LORD, and not unto men, so that God will give you the reward of the inheritance. This is a kingdom issue. There are other places where God says when we do something for another, we are actually serving him. (parable of the goats and the sheep Matt 25: 33-46, )*

#### **WITH A GOOD ATTITUDE.**

G2101: to be fully agreeable: - acceptable (-ted), well pleasing. - attitude

#### **NOT ANSWERING BACK, DISPUTING, OR MUTTERING.**

G483: not to dispute, refuse: - answer again, contradict, deny, gainsay (-er), speak against.

#### **WITHOUT HOLDING ANYTHING BACK – DOING THE BEST YOU CAN.**

G3557: not to sequester for oneself, that is, embezzle: - keep back, purloin.

#### **DEPENDING ON GOD'S POWER TO HELP US.**

G4102: depending on our persuasion, that is, credence; moral conviction (of religious truth, or the truthfulness of God or a religious teacher), especially reliance upon Christ for salvation; abstractly constancy in such profession; by extension the system of religious (Gospel) truth itself: - assurance, belief, believe, faith, fidelity.

#### **EXPECTING AN ETERNAL REWARD.**

We are serving God, not man. The result of our full acceptance of his authority without talking back or arguing, depending on God for faith and strength, will be eternal reward for us and making the gospel more attractive to the unbeliever.

*"And you show that you are a letter from Christ delivered by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts."  
2 Corinthians 3:3*

The most common complaint from Christian women is that their husbands do not lead them. Make it easy for your husband to lead you, for your own benefit.

The Bible does not command men to make their wives submit. Submission is something we do.

This means being part of his team – find out what he is doing and do everything you can to make it work.

He is the captain of the team, so he decides on the game plan.

For example, a happy atmosphere in a well-organised and neat home. Everything in its place so it can be found quickly and easily, ready for use.

## So why should we submit?

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- It brings glory to God.
- It adorns the gospel.
- It gives us spiritual power – the chain of authority.

*"Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you." James 4:7*

- It is a place of protection.
- It is a place of provision.

*Neither partner is supposed to take the place of God in the other's life!*

- **Do not make an idol of your partner.** You will only be disappointed. Only God can meet all our needs. Let God be God in your life.
- **Do not try to change your partner.** A mistake people often make is to try to change one another.

Jesus commands the husband to lead and love his wife. It is not her job to make him do it.

Jesus commands the wife to submit to her husband in everything. It is not his job to make her do it.

Each one can "speak the truth in love", but then they must hand their partner to God in prayer. Nagging, threatening, manipulating through tears or anger is not helpful. Only God can truly change someone from the inside.

Focus on aligning yourself with God. This is a difficult enough task for any one person!!

- **Love your partner and take delight in who God has made them.** During the early stages of a relationship, what we think is love is actually infatuation. We are in love with who we think the person is, or maybe we are in love with love itself! This might be a figment of our imagination, or the result of the person making a special effort to please us. The other person is trying to be the person they think we want them to be! At some stage, reality will begin to surface and we will begin to see the true person emerge.

They may not be exactly what we had in mind, but they are a unique and wonderful creation of God. It is now that we need to allow the love of God to overflow in our hearts towards our partner, to ask Him to show us how He sees them, and the plans and purposes He has for them.

- **Encourage them.** Each of us should be the other's main praise singer and cheer leader. Do not focus on weaknesses and mistakes, but look out for the things that they are doing well and tell them.
- **Pray for them.** "Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective." James 5:15-17
- **Speak God's promises over them.** Words are so powerful.

*"If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God" 1 Peter 4:11*

- **Forgive them.** Jesus calls us to forgive one another IN THE SAME WAY that he forgives us. When we repent, he gives us a clean slate. We have the privilege of doing this for one another. Unforgiveness puts our own salvation in question, and causes devastation in a marriage or any other relationship.
- **Comfort one another.** Be sensitive to one another's state of mind. If one of you is sad, stressed, angry, frustrated or confused, be there for them to hold them and understand them. Do not allow your partner to wallow in self-pity. When the time is right, encourage them to get up and try again.
- **Oppose sin.** Speak the truth in love.
- **Be loyal to one another.** Do not expose your partner, by talking about them in a derogatory way, even as a joke. If you need to get help in dealing with an issue, do it together with someone you can trust to be for you and not against you, someone with a track record of helping people to come through difficulties and challenges stronger in God.
- **Discern the spirits that are influencing you and your home.** Take authority over spiritual darkness in Jesus' name. Do not entertain evil spirits in your mind, in your heart or in your home.

## What if things go wrong?

There is no guarantee that your spouse will continue to live in a godly way.

For example, what happens if he or she

- Goes back to alcohol or drugs?
- Abandons you for another?
- Turns his or her back on the church and behaves like an unbeliever?
- Squanders all your money and/or gets into debt in a failed business deal, irresponsible spending or plain stupidity?

- Gets seriously ill, disfigured or disabled in an accident?
- Divorces you?
- Dies?

The Bible is clear that we will face all kinds of hardship in this life. There is a heaven, but this is not it. Earth is the closest unbelievers will get to heaven, and the closest believers will get to hell.

## Lead yourself well

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- Search the Scriptures. Find out what is required of you. Make sure you are a doer of the word. It is easy to think that because you know the Scriptures, everything is OK. But you have to live them, too!
- Get healed of your own hurts and deal with fears and anger. Forgive those who have hurt you, and ask those you have hurt to forgive you. Make amends where you can.
- AS FAR AS IT IS UP TO YOU, live in a way that is pleasing to God. IRRESPECTIVE of what they say or do.
- When your partner sins, it does not give you the right to sin as well.
- Live as someone who has to give an account for his or her life.

## Handle your relationships well

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- Live above reproach in every way. Do not give the devil a foothold.
- Set a good example for your children and do not use them to hurt or manipulate their other parent.

## Fruits of the Spirit

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If you are IN Christ, the fruit of the Spirit will be a natural overflow in your life.

*"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,"  
Galatians 5:22-23*

# True love

In our culture, we get to choose our marriage partners on the basis of our assessment of their attractiveness and suitability. Unfortunately, infatuation is not always a good indication of the latter! In some other cultures, marriage partners are carefully selected by the parents, who hopefully have the best interests of their children at heart. Even today some children are married off on the basis of political or social alliances or for financial reasons.

For whatever reason we enter the state of marriage, we are able to choose to love our partner.

Many couples find that the initial feelings of love fade away quite quickly, giving way to disappointment, disillusionment and even hate! However, God, the source of love, enables us to turn things around.

Mature love focuses not so much on receiving love as on being loving. This involves unselfish acts of kindness. It means wanting and working for the best for the other person.

Jesus sets the standard of love for us, speaking not of our marriage partners, but every believer.

*"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another." John 13:34*

*"Do to others as you would have them do to you." Luke 6:31*

## Greek words for love

A study of these words and their meanings will enrich our understanding of love.

There are several Greek words for love, as the Greek language distinguishes how the word is used. Ancient Greek has four distinct words for love: agápe, éros, philía, and storgē. However, as with other languages, it has been historically difficult to separate the meanings of these words. Nonetheless, the senses in which these words were generally used are given below.

- **Agápe** (γάπη agápē)
  - ◆ means "love" (unconditional love) in modern day Greek, such as in the term s'agapo (Σ'αγαπώ), which means "I love you". In Ancient Greek, it often refers to a general affection or deeper sense of "true love" rather than the attraction suggested by "eros". Agape is used in the biblical passage known as the "love chapter", 1 Corinthians 13, and is described there and throughout the New Testament as sacrificial love. Agape is also used in ancient texts to denote feelings for a good meal, one's children, and the feelings for a spouse. It can be described as the feeling of being content or holding one in high regard.
- **Éros** (ἔρως érōs)
  - ◆ is passionate love, with sensual desire and longing. The Modern Greek word "erotas" means "intimate love;" however, eros does not have to be sexual in nature. Eros can be interpreted as a love for someone whom you love more than the "philia", love of friendship.

- **Philia** (φιλία philía)
  - ♦ means friendship or brotherly love in modern Greek. It is a dispassionate virtuous love, a concept developed by Aristotle. It includes loyalty to friends, family, and community, and requires virtue, equality and familiarity. In ancient texts, philos denoted a general type of love, used for love between family, between friends, a desire or enjoyment of an activity, as well as between lovers.
- **Storgē** (στοργή storgē)
  - ♦ means "affection" in ancient and modern Greek. It is natural affection, like that felt by parents for offspring. Rarely used in ancient works, and then almost exclusively as a descriptor of relationships within the family. It is also known to express mere acceptance or putting up with situations, as in "loving" the tyrant. (Extracts from Wikipedia)

## Chapman's 5 emotional love languages

- Words of Affirmation
- Quality Time
- Gifts
- Acts of Service
- Physical Touch

Find out what your love languages are. Find out what your partner's love languages are. Then learn to speak and hear each other's languages! To find out more on this interesting topic, read: The Five Love Languages by Dr. Gary Chapman.

## 1 Corinthians 13

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*"If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames but have not love, I gain nothing.*

*Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.*

*Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when perfection comes, the imperfect disappears. When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me. Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.*

*And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love."*

This passage provides a useful checklist to audit yourself in terms of loving your partner.

## What if I don't feel love for my partner any more?

God tells us what to do in this Scripture, written to the church in Ephesus, and talking about their love for Him:

*"Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken your first love. Remember the height from which you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first." Revelation 2:4,5*

When the feelings fade, take time to remember the things that you did together when you were courting. The funny thing is that we instinctively know how to kindle the flame when our relationship is new and we are trying to win each other's hearts, but we get lazy and distracted with the business of life, and we start taking our love for granted, and then we wonder why we no longer feel in love.

It is amazing how the passion returns when we take the time to really listen to one another, to join in each other's lives, and pay attention to romance. This does not have to cost much money. A picnic on the beach, some flowers picked from the garden, a specially set table, can be just as special as dinner at a fancy restaurant or a florist's bouquet. Do you remember when you used to spend hours watching him play rugby or surf? Do you remember taking time to notice and enjoy her new dress or haircut?

# Sex in marriage

## Physical intimacy

How important is the issue of physical intimacy to God? In the Bible we see that God has placed it in the centre of all things, and therefore, so must we. In the beginning we read of how God made everything male and female and instructed them to go and be fruitful and multiply. He made Adam and then he made Eve to be his companion and helper. They, too, were instructed to multiply and fill the earth.

- Physical intimacy produces oneness. A permanent joining together until death.
- God uses this picture to describe to us the relationship between Jesus and the Church.
- The devil, the world and our own selfishness has perverted this picture and made it something ugly.
- We need to reclaim the biblical picture of married love and place it at the centre of our attention, where God has put it.
- We can only love from an overflow of God's love poured out into our hearts. (Romans 5: 5)

### **This is warfare!!**

It is worth all the effort we put into it. We will reap a rich reward.

## Our enemies

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- Some of us have ended up dry and empty because we have tried to do it on our own and not trusted in God as our source.
- Others are full of fear or insecurity. We feel that our appearance disqualifies us in some way. Let us not allow this to rob us of what God has given to us. Let us make every effort to look attractive. But a warm and loving heart is of more worth than a flawless body.
- Others have wounds from the past, either from our own actions or the actions of others. God has given us a simple way to deal with pain. He has made provision for all our pain. It requires a decision from us to truly forgive and release all who have hurt us, and to repent for our sin. Then He comes and heals our wounds. If we will let Him.

## So what does sex look like from God's point of view?

It is so great that this is an area where we do not have to guess. Scripture makes it very clear.

- Sex is good. If you think that sex is in any way bad or dirty, it is because of your brokenness and you need to get healed and change your way of thinking.
- The marriage bed is pure and holy.

- Our bodies do not belong to ourselves only, but also to our marriage partner. This means that we cannot say "no", too often. It means we have to consider carefully what "no", means and how long it will go on for. "No", puts us in a dangerous place of possible temptation to sin. It erodes our oneness. It gives the devil a place to operate.

*"Since there is so much immorality, each man should have his own wife, and each woman her own husband. The husband should fulfill his marital duty to his wife, and likewise the wife to her husband. The wife's body does not belong to her alone, but also to her husband. In the same way, the husband's body does not belong to him alone but also to his wife. Do not deprive each other except by mutual consent and for a time, so that you can devote yourselves to prayer. Then come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control." 1 Corinthians 7: 2-5*

- It is meant to be creative. It is also rich beyond imagining. It should be a well-spring of life.
- God made men and women completely different. This means that we have to learn about each other. For this thing to work best, we have to forsake our selfishness and find out what is pleasing to the other. It is well worth the investment.
- God has put it at the centre of his attention and so should we. This means prioritizing it. It should not be a matter of the last scrap of energy and enthusiasm at the end of the day. Well, not all the time, anyway.
- We need to guard our relationship with all our heart. This means to honour and cherish one another and to never take our love for granted. As Christian women we might get lazy and complacent and think that our husbands will never be unfaithful to us because they fear God. This might be true, but surely we can rise up and do something magnificent!

## Some practical tips

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Save some energy for the end of the day. Maybe you can have a nap of 20 minutes or so at some time.

Differentiate between "quickies" and true lovemaking events. Plan a special treat once a week if you can, and take occasional "honeymoon" weekends. Take the time to do the things that helped you fall in love in the first place.

## For the men

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Sex really is at the centre of the universe, and that is the place God has given to it.

### SO WHY DO WOMEN NOT WANT TO HAVE SEX?

Intimacy and value

- Vulnerability – it involves uncovering.
- Insecurity
- Self-worth
- Weariness
- Boredom and taking things for granted

- Issues
- Unity

### WHAT ARE THE ANSWERS?

- **Vulnerability** – be a covering for your wife. Generally, do not joke about her. Honour her in her presence and in her absence to your friends and hers. Esteem her highly. Do not allow anyone including her parents and yours to criticize her. Fight her battles for her. Let her feel protected. Then she will feel safe to expose herself to you. In the bedroom, lock the door. Make sure you will not be interrupted.
- **Security** – the start of this thing is covenant. An irrevocable promise. She needs to feel that you belong together, that nothing will put your unity at risk. You are one. When you care for her it is as if you are caring for your own body. In particular, when you made your vows, you left every other potential mate to join yourself to her only. Live that out. Let her know that you delight yourself in her body. No matter how hot she was when she was twenty, time and pregnancy take their toll. She may even be in an accident or need a disfiguring operation. If she is consumed with the imperfections of her body she cannot focus on lovemaking. Fear of rejection and abandonment are your enemies. In general, be her protector and her provider. Treat her as a weaker vessel. In the bedroom, tell her you love her and are devoted to her. Tell her what about her physical body is attractive to you. Be passionate.
- **Self-worth** – because men have a strong sex drive, it can easily become about him. Women can feel like unpaid prostitutes. They can feel used. In general, make a space for her to express herself. Take time to listen to her and take her opinions and ideas seriously. Avoid the extremes of treating her like a pampered princess or being so consumed with work and sport that you barely notice her existence unless there is no supper or sex.
- **Weariness** – if sex is the last on a long list of tasks for the day you cannot blame her for being less than enthusiastic. If your wife really is tired every night, try to lessen her work load. This might include work inside and outside the home. Perhaps you can employ a domestic worker or a baby sitter to help out one or two days a week. Maybe there are some tasks that you can help with yourself. The message of love and caring that you send by practically helping with the house or the children is out of proportion to the actual effort involved. Not every sexual encounter has to involve a lot of time, planning and effort, but perhaps once a week or so you can create an unhurried time, maybe in the morning or another time of day, and do the special things that really count.
- **Boredom and taking things for granted** – if this thing really is so important to you, make some effort to find out what really turns her on. Be creative and enthusiastic. Don't get cross that she doesn't put it in the centre if you don't.
- **Issues** – many women have misused this gift from God or have been abused in some way. There may be issues of fear, hurt, anger, guilt, etc. Make every effort to deal with these things. Your unconditional love and devotion, your commitment and perseverance are powerful tools in overcoming resistance. If necessary, let her see a professional to help her. Keep on trying – never give up.
- **Unity** – always remember that you are on the same side. If one wins, both win. If one loses, both lose. Do not allow the devil to trick you into taking opposing sides and fighting each other. Stand together and face the enemy.
- What about the husband encouraging the wife to develop herself? He can help to suggest how this can be done especially if it involves extra money being laid out or looking after the children one evening a week or so she can go to pottery lessons or whatever. It is important for a woman to feel that her husband supports her in this.

## For the ladies

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Your husband not getting things right is no excuse for your laziness and bad attitude. There are things that you can do to improve your sex life and your marriage.

The most important sex organ is the mind. We need to search our hearts and minds and make sure that we see this thing the way God wants us to.

- **If there are issues that you need to sort out**, make every effort to do so. Forgive. Receive God's healing. Extend trust and hope. Get the help you need. Work hard at sorting yourself out. It is worth it.
- **Put this issue where it belongs**, at the centre. It is not an issue you can sweep under the carpet or push aside.
- **Vulnerability** – you can make a safe and secure space by putting a lock on the door and anything else which will make you feel safe. If your husband dishonours you by coarse joking or fooling around, try to tell him in a gentle and respectful way and in a neutral atmosphere (not in the middle of a heated argument!) Start by saying “I feel like you do not love or respect me when you ...”. Do not begin “You always... or you never...” etc, as this puts a person on the defensive. If he does not change, continue to love him and respect him. Set a good example in everything. Forgive him and do not pick up offense and carry it around. Keep your mind alert and ready for battle – not against him but against fear, insecurity, hurt etc. Let the love of God pour into your heart and overflow towards him.
- **Security** – if you feel insecure, do not give way to fear. Insecurity is your enemy more than the likelihood that your husband may stray. If you do not feel happy about your body, do what you can to improve the situation. Lose weight, exercise, get a haircut, buy some underwear that makes you feel good. Do not allow yourself to be consumed with imaginary faults. Even top actresses and models worry about their wrinkly knees or big feet. Your husband chose you so he picked out what he considers to be attractive. Celebrate yourself and do not compare yourself with others.
- **Self-worth** – women can be so busy meeting other people's needs, or so consumed with their weaknesses and failings, that they do not develop themselves. Make a space for yourself to find out what you like and do not like. Explore who you are, what you enjoy doing and what talents and skills you have. Grow as a person. Make friends and do things together. Have a life outside of your marriage and family so that you have something to add to the relationship.
- **Weariness** – if sex really is at the centre of the universe, make it a priority. Schedule time to rest, to relax and revive yourself. Reorganise. This includes the things and activities that use up your time and energy. Get the help you need. Spend less time reading soppy novels and watching T.V. Even gossiping with your friends or your mom. Set up a baby sitting situation so that you have time away from the distractions of child minding. Arrange your life to keep the main thing the main thing. It is at least partly under your control.
- **Boredom and taking things for granted** – Make the extra effort for both of you. Do you welcome him home with joy and enthusiasm? Is the house in order and everything under control? Does he pause at the door to gather his strength to face the chaos and terrible attitude, or is he full of anticipation of love and peace? I know that this will take a superhuman effort and will not be possible all the time! But it is worth aiming for. In the bedroom, what will add to the experience for you? Music, candles, perfume, satin sheets, sexy underwear? Make it a lifelong project.
- **Make every effort to keep the peace.** Don't let the devil divide you.

# Communication in marriage

In our communication, we are both submitted to Jesus and committed to pleasing Him. We want to find an answer to our difficulties or problems and we want to continue to build our relationship with each other.

- Our goal is to become more like Jesus.
- Put the other person FIRST.
- NEVER criticise your spouse to another.

*" Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others." Philipians 2:3-4*

- Communication is all about sharing our lives with one another. Because men and women are so different it can take some effort to understand one another and how to communicate well.
- The art of conversation is like a tennis match – we take turns with the ball, but quickly return it to the other. Learn to ask questions and listen carefully to the answers. It is not about winning an argument or putting forward your point of view, but about finding out as much as possible about the other person, their dreams and ambitions, fears and failures, good and bad experiences.
- It is important to take time to communicate. An annual planning time to evaluate the previous year and set goals and priorities for the coming year is a good idea. Perhaps you need a weekly "meeting" to coordinate the week's activities.
- A common diary or calendar can be useful - perhaps on your phones? Remember to always share news with your partner before anyone else.
- A date night once a week is an opportunity to get away from the mundane and do something fun. Make the effort to be creative. Take the time to plan your activities so that you can include plenty of variety. Spend some time preparing what you would like to talk about, formally or informally – books you have read, movies you have seen, a new hobby, a holiday you would like to take, or an event you would like to attend. Look for projects you can work on together.
- It is also important for each partner to have their own lives, as well as their lives together. Develop your own interests and friends. Do not become a clinging vine. Keep growing and learning your whole life.

## Types of communication

### Non-verbal

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Body movements such as folded arms, clenched fist, touch, fidgeting, playing with hair, looking away, rolling eyes, yawning, reading or watching TV, facial expressions, e.g. raised eyebrow, smile, frown,

Researchers say that a large portion of our communication is, in fact, non-verbal.

## Verbal

What you say and how you say it (tone of voice).

In his book "Why am I afraid to tell you who I am?" John Powell talks about 5 levels of communication.

- Cliché – superficial – small talk, jokes, funny stories.
- Facts – reporting information – no commentary.
- Ideas and judgments, opinions, views – some risk of ridicule or rejection. "I think ..."
- Emotions – feelings, hopes, joys, passions, fears, ambitions. Reveals who you are. "I feel ..."
- Complete emotional and personal truthful communication. Requires trust and acceptance.

We pass through these different stages of conversation both in a relationship in general and also every time we meet. The levels gradually increase in intimacy.

It is strange that we are often more polite with complete strangers than with our marriage partner. We tend to start taking them for granted and let our guard down with them. This is a good thing in some ways, but not when it leads to disrespect and rudeness. Those magic little words we learned as tiny tots are still powerful in adulthood: **please, thank you, sorry, I forgive you, excuse me.**

**Do not dump on your partner.** If you are struggling with something, first pray about it and try to deal with it with the help and guidance of your heavenly Father. You do not want to cause division by causing an offence in your partner's heart against someone with whom you are having problems.

**Keep a watch on your tongue.** Deal with your heart. Out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks. So this is not about lying, it is about getting your heart and mind in the right place so that you can speak the truth and not hide.

*"This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.*

*If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives." 1 John 1:5-10*

**Do not gossip.**

*"For out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks. The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in him. But I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken. For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned." Matthew 12:34-37*

Jesus is speaking about words that are malicious or empty. Sometimes it is necessary to speak about an issue so that something can be done about the situation. In this case, it is important to speak to the right person in the right way.

## Dealing with conflict

Most people hate confrontation, preferring to bypass a difficult situation. Most of us would rather

- withdraw emotionally and perhaps physically from the person.
- bury the problem, forgive them, and act as if nothing happened.
- allow our anger to explode in an unrelated context.

### So how can we handle this in a better way?

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#### **Believe the best of one another.**

Conflict is often the result of misunderstandings, differences in points of view or perspective, different expectations or poor communication.

You are on the same team, so don't shoot each other in the foot – or worse, stab one another in the back!

Choose the right time – not when you are tired, angry or busy – make an appointment to talk.

Plan what you are going to say. Think about what you want to convey – verbally and non-verbally. What effect will your words have on the other person?

*"A word aptly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver." Proverbs 25: 11*

- Be clear and direct. Do not hint or suggest and expect the other person to guess.
- Talk from your point of view. Say "I feel..." or "I need.." rather than "You never..." or "You always."
- Get your emotions under control. It is hard to remain objective when emotions are running high.
- Do not become whiny or aggressive. Do not try to defend yourself.
- If things are getting out of control, take some time out and regroup.
- Really listen to each other. Do not interrupt or try to finish your partner's sentence.
- Try to understand. The other person has the right to an opinion.
- Read between the lines. What do they mean? How do they feel? Why do they feel this way?
- Are you being selfish or considering what is best for both of you?
- Try not to fall into explosions of temper, tears, criticism, silence
- Speak the truth in love. Do not allow yourself to be intimidated.
- If necessary, go away and think, pray and read the Word. Ask God to show you what is happening and what he wants you to do.
- If you are not getting breakthrough, ask someone to help you.

Our leaders are experienced in mediating in this kind of situation and will be objective, not taking sides, but wanting the best for both of you.

## What if you have done something wrong?

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### Accept responsibility.

Admit that you were wrong. Call sin by its name. It is difficult to admit failure, even to oneself, but seeing where we have gone wrong is an opportunity to grow. Perfectionism is a form of idolatry. Only Jesus was perfect in every way.

### Say you are sorry.

Don't make excuses or try to blame someone else. It is amazing how powerful this little word is, and how hard it is to say it.

### Ask for forgiveness.

Jesus said that we must forgive one another in the same way that he forgives us.

### Value the other person.

Express your appreciation and love for them. Tell them that you want to reconcile.

### Make amends if you can.

Plan to change.

Set realistic goals and make plans to do things differently in the future. Tell your partner what to expect.

Always look for growth – BECOMING MORE LIKE JESUS

## If they agree that they have been wrong

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- Explain the impact of their wrong doing on you. Call sin by its name.
- Forgive them.
- Tell them that you love them.
- Explain how you would like them to change. There may be consequences to their behaviour. If necessary you may need to put boundaries in place to prevent repetition.

*"Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbour, for we are all members of one body. 'In your anger do not sin.' Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold. He who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with his own hands, that he may have something to share with those in need. Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful in building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you." Ephesians 4: 25-32*

*"Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others." Philippians 2: 3-5*

# Finances in marriage

## Being faithful with your money

*" Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business and to work with your hands, just as we told you, so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders and so that you will not be dependent on anybody." 1 Thessalonians 4:11-12*

### Prepare well

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In your early 20's, if possible, study, get special skills and knowledge.

People who are well-qualified in a unusual field find it easier to obtain employment and are potentially able to earn more and to find greater job satisfaction.

Never pass up an opportunity to improve your skills.

### Work as if for Jesus

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- Be the best, go the extra mile, with a great attitude.
- Set a good example in life and speech.
- Honour your boss and co-workers.

*" Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every authority instituted among men: whether to the king, as the supreme authority, or to governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right. For it is God's will that by doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish men. Live as free men, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; live as servants of God. Show proper respect to everyone: Love the brotherhood of believers, fear God, honour the king.*

*Slaves, submit yourselves to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and considerate, but also to those who are harsh. For it is commendable if a man bears up under the pain of unjust suffering because he is conscious of God. But how is it to your credit if you receive a beating for doing wrong and endure it? But if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God. To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps. " He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth." 1 Peter 2:13-22*

- Shine for Jesus - make sure your conduct is above reproach.
- Give no place for the devil to gain a foothold.
- Even if you receive no earthly reward, God promises that He will reward you in eternity.
- Let everyone see your good works and "praise your Father in heaven". Matthew 5:16

## Be a good steward

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*"You are not your own; you were bought at a price." 1 Corinthians 6:19-20*

You must give an account for your life, as it belongs to Him.

Pay your tithe, and be a generous giver.

The purpose of work is to provide for yourself and help others in need.

When making decisions, e.g. where you will live, marriage, children, ask God for direction as well as the elders or other leaders for wise, impartial and biblical input.

## Budget

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- Everybody needs to know how they are spending their money. The information provided by income and expenditure records will enable you to make good decisions in the future.
- Use the form to set out your expenditure.
- If the ACTUAL use of your money does not match your expectations, then write down every rand you spend for two or three months. Then draw up a more realistic budget.
- Married couples need to agree on a reasonable plan for their expenses. Most couples settle on a working budget, and consult each other on all decisions above a certain amount. This amount would depend on your individual circumstances, and may change over time. It is a good idea for each partner to have a monthly amount of "pocket money" which they can spend without having to explain to the other! This is especially true if you are working on a very tight budget.

### IF YOUR OUTPUT EXCEEDS YOUR INPUT, THEN YOUR UPKEEP WILL BE YOUR DOWNFALL!!

- Ask for help if you need it. Many of our leaders have been very successful in helping people with financial planning.
- If you are planning to get married, draw up a budget and share it with your intended partner. Ask them to do the same. Work together on an expected budget for your joint household.
- It is important to share your financial situation with each other before marriage. Disclose all assets and liabilities to each other to avoid disillusionment and despair later!!

## Be satisfied with what you have

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*"I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want." Philippians 4:12*

*"But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful*

*desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs."*

*"Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life." 1 Timothy 6:6-10,17-19*

*"You shall not covet your neighbor's wife. You shall not set your desire on your neighbor's house or land, his manservant or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor." Deuteronomy 5:21*

## **Do not get into debt!**

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- Many leaders believe that it is permissible to buy houses and cars on credit, provided you can afford the repayments.
- This is because you have an asset that you can resell if necessary to pay off the debt.
- It is still cheaper to save and buy for cash if at all possible!
- Debt is a very expensive waste of money! Instead of receiving interest on your investments, you are paying interest to someone else!
- If you find yourself in debt, make every effort to free yourself.
- Downsize in every way, make the necessary cuts.
- Pay back the loans with the highest interest first, or consolidate all your loans under your home loan, which has a lower rate of interest.
- If you need help with this, ask one of our leaders who are gifted in this area.

## **OWN A BUSINESS?**

Many people think that having their own business will give them more freedom and enable them to earn more. Unfortunately they often underestimate the amount of time and energy a business demands.

## **KEEPING RECORDS**

It is very important to keep financial records and other documents in a safe and accessible place.

## **MEDICAL AID**

Most people find a hospital plan meets their needs. Although you will have to cover day to day expenses, the plan will pay for more serious care involving hospitalisation or prescribed minimum benefits. It is important to ensure that you have medical aid before getting pregnant as medical aids do not cover you if you are already pregnant when you join. Childbirth can be extremely expensive if baby is born prematurely or there are complications with the pregnancy or birth.

## SAVINGS AND INVESTMENTS

Put money aside for "a rainy day". You will be earning interest instead of paying it

## SAVING FOR EDUCATION

It is worth putting money away so that you can give your children a good start in life.

## INSURANCE

- Short term:
  - ◆ Cars and other possessions
- Long term (life):
  - ◆ It is important to insure cars and other possessions against damage or theft. Life insurance means that your family will be able to survive without you if necessary.
- Planning for retirement:
  - ◆ Pensions
  - ◆ Homes or other property
  - ◆ Retirement annuities

Start preparing for your future from an early age. Property is a good investment, and it is worth buying your own home if at all possible. Make sure you choose carefully as buying and selling is expensive.

- Planning for death:
  - ◆ Will
  - ◆ Other documents
  - ◆ Guardians for your children

Prepare properly for your death. Make a will when you draw up your antenuptial contract. Make sure your family will be able to find all the appropriate documents if you are no longer around. Nominate guardians for your children so that you know that they will be well taken care of.

## OUTREACHES

Go! You will be stretched and come back with new confidence in God.

Support others. When you cannot go yourself, you can help send someone else.

## GIVING

*"Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver." 2 Corinthians 9:7*

It is good to seek God when deciding what to give, when, and to whom. It is also good to get perspective from an elder, especially when dealing with large amounts. Some people are experts at getting others to support them, and sometimes this short circuits God's work in their lives.

We believe in helping people to get their lives in order, handling work and finances well, in order for them to grow and to bring glory to God.

*" All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had. With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and much grace was upon them all. There were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned lands or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone as he had need." Acts 4:32 - 35*

**Additional Notes:**